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ABSTRACT

To help Georgia school administrators, educators, and community members, this handbook suggests ideas and plans for strengthening school-community relations and increasing community involvement in schools. The first section lays out the four steps district administrators should take in developing a systemwide community involvement program, including research, planning, action, and evaluation. In the second section are presented ideas for involving teachers, students, staff, parents, nonparents, senior citizens, business, and the news media in improving school public relations. The third section discusses ways to recruit and work with volunteers, while the fourth offers ideas on conducting school meetings, surveying the community, and orienting new teachers. A list of printed resources on school-community programs concludes the handbook. (Author/RW)

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A Handbook for Community Involvement

Georgia Department of Education

EA 014 882

Public Information and Publications Division
Office of Administrative Services
Georgia Department of Education
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Charles McDaniel
State Superintendent of Schools
1982

Foreword

Strengthening school-community relations is one of five top priorities I have identified for Georgia public schools in the 80s. I believe that public education should be exactly that: open to the public, supported by the public, responsive to the public.

The responsibility for good school-community relations belongs to both the school and the community. Schools must willingly accept, even actively solicit the involvement of all segments of their communities in school activities. This means planning and conducting a continuous program of community involvement designed to enlist the support of the school staff, parents, non-parents, business leaders, the formal and informal power structures, the news media — everyone.

For community members, the responsibility for good relations with schools is equally important. Citizens must be willing to use their time and energy for the schools in volunteer roles and by learning for themselves the schools' goals, needs, problems and successes. People are much more likely to support schools if they know about them from personal experience.

This handbook has been developed by the staff of the Public Information and Publications Division to help both schools and communities plan and conduct programs to strengthen their relations. The material has been gathered from schools and systems all over the nation. The ideas and programs have been tested and found successful by public school supporters everywhere.

I am confident you will find this handbook valuable. I urge you to use it and to call on the department staff for additional help in this important task. I believe the development of stronger school-community relations is both urgent and essential to restoring public schools to their vital and historic role as the bedrock of our American democracy.

Charles McDaniel

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Introduction

Schools, homes and communities are partners in educating students. The partnership must work successfully if young people are to be well-educated. In a strong, healthy partnership all members pull together and support each other.

This is a how-to book for school administrators who want to strengthen the partnership with their communities. It contains lots of common sense rules in dealing with various community members and some bright ideas which can be adapted to each individual school, system or district.

Some of the ideas for activities are overlapping, and some individuals might belong to more than one group (i.e., parents can also be community members, volunteers, business persons). But the whole point of the book is to start administrators involving all these people in their schools.

Public schools belong to the public. The more the public is involved with its schools the better it feels about them.

To Administrators: It Isn't Always Easy . . . But It Can Be Fun

A school administrator is like the operator of a large and complicated industrial machine. So many parts to keep going, so many pieces to fit together, so many items needing attention.

No wonder it is sometimes hard for administrators to stay on top of things. They want and need ideas that will make their jobs easier. Community involvement is just such an idea.

With the many responsibilities and tremendous work loads most administrators face, they often overlook a valuable source of help — community people. An interested, involved and supportive public can go a long way in making a school official's life bearable, even occasionally pleasant.

A principal, superintendent or curriculum director may develop the best education program in the world, but if parents and other community members oppose it, it is doomed to fail. Just as with the big machine — if one part is not working right the whole system is thrown out of kilter.

The complaint from some administrators today is that a program for community involvement takes up a lot of time, and time is not something they have to spare. School executives now working on involvement activities said the same thing in the past. They, too, had good intentions and little time. So they put off, forgot or ignored the big, often vocal public surrounding their neighborhood schools. Once they made the initial time investment they found it has paid off in dividends not only to themselves but also to the students who look to them for guidance.

These administrators have found that community people pitching in and helping the schools have made their jobs easier. They receive more support and fewer complaints from parents and other adults. Some have been able to get businesses to support them financially and through donated goods and services. Others have been able to get more positive media coverage.

A few common sense rules apply to any endeavor to involve the public in schools. They take little effort, less time and if followed carefully, reap big rewards.

●

First, make a commitment to involve yourself and your staff in reaching out to the surrounding community. **Identify all your publics** — groups or individuals with which the school has an important relationship.

Share school information with parents and other interested individuals and groups. They want to be informed, in-the-know, **up** on school happenings. They have entrusted you with two of their most prized possessions — their kids and their money — and they have every right to know what you are doing with both.

Do good...then tell about it. (An elected superintendent phrased it another way, "Do good. And you might live to tell about it!") This is public relations in a capsule. Do not be shy of rallying support for your school. If your school, staff or students excel in any way, let everyone know.

Support public education in the community. Show and tell how good public schools really are.

Encourage parent/teacher partnerships. This is how public education began and still remains an extremely vital aspect of education today.

Listen to your community. Good listeners have fewer critics.

Smile a lot. You and your attitude can turn people off or turn them on to your schools. A happy administrator is perceived as having a handle on the job, as enjoying working with students and staff members. When the everyday pressure of running any big organization gets to be a little trying it isn't always easy to smile, but it can be fun when you see how well that smile works.

Putting the Public In Public Schools

A decision to rally more community support is a good one. Whether negative press coverage, an impending bond election or the sudden realization of how much the students will benefit from strong community involvement prompted the decision, the move is positive. Perhaps the quickest way to get the public feeling good about a school is to get them into the school. Attending an after-school event, a principal's coffee, an awards ceremony or a guided tour of the school, or volunteering to tutor students, make bulletin boards or beautify the grounds have often provided the positive personal experiences people need to feel welcome at school.

Contact with teachers and students reinforces citizens' feelings of pride in and commitment to educating the young. They need to see classes in session, teachers teaching and students learning.

Careful preparation is the key to getting this kind of involvement going. Community involvement that happens by accident is seldom the kind school people want. Positive attitudes on the parts of teachers, other staff and students as well as administrators are a must. Each of your publics should benefit in some way by a planned contact with the schools.

There are four steps in developing a systemwide community involvement program that works — research, planning, action and evaluation.

Research

School officials would be foolhardy to undertake a plan of community involvement without first knowing their community, its wants, needs and expectations. Knowing a community's expectations is as important as knowing a school system's capabilities, because how well a school delivers what its community expects forms the base of that community's opinion of public education.

Research reveals the answers to questions about community concerns. For an analysis that will give information on needs and resources, consider the following factors.

- Number of households in attendance area
  - Percent with children
  - Percent without children
- Racial, ethnic and religious make-up of community
- Socioeconomic level of community
  - Percent of Aid to Dependent Children (ADC)
  - Percent unemployed
  - Percent on Social Security
  - Percent of households qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches
- Number of households with only one parent
- Average number of children per household
- Major employers in the community
- Civic/political/traditional goals of community
- Churches serving the area
- Businesses in close proximity to school
- Educational background of parents
- Service clubs and social agencies operating in your area
- Number of households with non-English speaking parents
- Number of households with foster children
- Who are the community leaders?
- What educational/recreational facilities are available?

For an analysis that will provide information on community wants and expectations, researchers must go directly to the source — community people. Researching or surveying your publics can in itself be a form of involvement. Most people like to be asked their opinion on matters. They feel their thoughts and ideas are important. So, they believe, if the school is taking time to ask what they think, the school must really care about them.

There are three ways to gather public opinion — face-to-face interviews, telephone surveys and written surveys. The feedback you receive reveals many thoughts of local citizens who vote, pay taxes, make laws, attend churches and send their children to public and private schools. It can indicate what schools are doing right, what they are doing wrong, who needs to be reached more, who isn't being reached at all, who or which issues need more attention and who or which need less. Survey feedback can also point out who is pleased with the job the schools are doing, who is displeased and why. A well-prepared and conducted survey can in addition forecast trouble spots and how to avoid them.

The type survey to use depends on many things — mainly your public. Are you polling parents, non-parents, registered voters, civic club members? Also to be taken into consideration is the amount of time, resources and labor required.

Small surveys are usually most successful for schools. They do not try to accomplish too many things at once. Ones that are worded so that questions are direct and to the point, yielding clear answers, can be put to good use.

For important guidelines on conducting school surveys or opinion polls, see "How to Conduct Surveys" on page 81.

Survey Projects

Conduct a survey that tells how well your communications channels are working. Are people getting news about the schools?

Find out community attitudes about sports in the schools. Should more money be spent to maintain current programs? Less money?

Check community's awareness of declining enrollment. What do they see as ways of handling the dilemma?

Identify the community's long-range priorities. Is it time to hold the line on new programs? Are there some plans for the future you might need to change? Are there some things you are doing now that you need to change?

Survey high school students. Focus on career plans and counseling.

Ask citizens if they want to be more involved in the schools. If so, how? advisory groups? volunteer programs?

Determine whether citizens really understand how the school district operates.

Give nonparents a chance to say whether they care about the school at all. What do they know about it? What do they want to know? Would they be willing to help? How?

Find out which programs parents are excited about or disappointed in.

Parents' groups can perform surveys if properly trained. Here, a word of caution: do not waste time on a survey if the information is available through an easier, less time-consuming means.

Other Ways To Get Feedback

Surveys are not the sole source of eliciting community opinion. Many other ways exist. Here are a few.

Key communicators, people who are opinion leaders in a school area who talk regularly to large numbers of people, can be recruited to communicate with administrators on the attitudes and rumors about schools among neighborhood residents.

For more information on starting a key communicators program see page 48.

A listener's bureau, composed of top staff members, can listen to what others have to say in various parent and community meetings and report findings to school officials. They can answer questions from the groups and get suggestions for improvement.

Suggestion boxes placed in school buildings or public places such as banks, stores, libraries and doctors' offices will encourage citizens to communicate with the schools.

Visits to schools by special interest groups such as realtors or business leaders can give these people a first hand view of what goes on and can provide immediate feedback to school officials.

Exit interviews when a family or employee leaves the school or district are an opportunity to find out what they thought about their experiences with the school.

Letters to the editor columns in newspapers many times contain questions and concerns about education matters.

Radio talk shows often have comments about schools.

Citizens voice their opinions all over the community. Be attuned to their conversations.

Especially for Small School Systems

Breakfast meetings with different groups each month give every segment of the community a chance to voice their opinions.

Open office hours at a particular time each week gives community members the chance to meet with school leaders about what is concerning them. These hours need to be publicized. Radio and newspaper spots are good reminders.

Neighborhood walks in which administrators go to homes in the community and get to know the people on a personal, friendly basis often improve communication.

Neighborhood party lines for which two parents serve as operators have proved successful. These

parents talk to other community members about the schools, find out their opinions, gripes, positive comments and meet with the superintendent informally to discuss the issues, then report the results of the meetings to community members.

Especially for Large School Systems

Hire a qualified person to serve as a school/community relations specialist to coordinate all involvement activities and communications.

Use an ombudsman to serve as an education trouble shooter between the school and community. This person relays school information to the public and clears rumors and misunderstandings voiced by community members. He or she offsets problems before they get out of hand and explains the school system's policies and stands on particular issues.

Develop close communication between the board of education, superintendent and all major parent groups in the area. Listen to what these groups are saying.

Establish an information center to serve as a quick referral source for staff members wishing to relay information to the public.

Planning

After each public has been identified and its attitude toward the schools gauged, it is time to plan a program which encourages each group to participate in a school related activity. The objective is to change negative attitudes and reinforce positive ones.

Before beginning an extensive campaign or just one simple activity, get help. If planning a simple newsletter, ask staff members, teachers and active parents what they want to share or to know. If planning a comprehensive involvement program, get many different people in on ground floor planning. It might take more meeting time, but it gives everyone a sense of ownership toward the program and a sense of loyalty and dedication to it. Besides, the program will benefit from more ideas, additional resources and many people to share the responsibilities and the rewards.

Forming a Committee

The size of a planning committee depends on the size of the program being planned and the size of the school system for which it is being planned. Five to 15 individuals from key publics (board members, teachers, parents, administrators, support staff, business leaders, church leaders) should be enough to work effectively as long as there is a good cross section of people.

When considering whom to choose as committee members, focus on the following points.

Roles to be carried out
Personal philosophies
Ability to work well with others
Recognized leadership qualities
Commitment of time
Enthusiasm for the job

Keep in mind this is a working committee, not just a decision making one. Committee functions should be clear before members are chosen so talents can be matched to tasks.

The committee head is the spokesperson for the entire group and is the key figure in making sure the program runs smoothly. Success depends heavily on his or her ability to motivate people to become genuinely concerned about the schools. Careful thought should be given to the qualifications of the chairperson.

Qualifications to consider include
ability to communicate effectively
good working relationship with superintendent and other administrators
recognized leader who can delegate authority
ability to organize and see goals through

If the decision is to start a full-fledged campaign and the schools have never tried anything similar before, one good choice for committee head is the school public relations or public information officer. This individual has skills and experiences that will give clear direction to the other members.

Functions Of Committee Members

The following persons will give the committee membership the variety of representation needed.

Former or present board of education member serves as a tie to the board.

Principals or assistants — represent ideas of administration.

Media representative — provides a valuable link with the community.

Teachers — offer in-depth understanding of students and parents.

Parents — often first choice as committee members. They have varied talents, expertise and lots of good ideas.

Older students — have here-and-now perspectives on the schools that no one else can give.

School staff — from maintenance to mental health — often have valuable insights and a wide range of community contacts.

If a comprehensive system of involvement is what your committee thinks is called for, the following represent the basics of a system-level involvement plan.

School System-level Involvement Plan

A systemwide newsletter published on a regular schedule

A parent advisory group which meets regularly and understands its role

A system for each school to regularly share information with the communications department and the media

A phone call a week to parents by teachers and other staff members

Feedback sheets for passing along phone or personal comments to the school principal and other system officials

Parent-teacher conferences that encourage a team relationship between parent and teacher

An adequate system for communication with students

An active community or booster club

A system for communicating with single parent families and families in which both parents work

A program to involve nonparent taxpayers in the community — whether a school volunteer program, adult education program or both

Coffees for parents and other groups in the community

A program to welcome newcomers to the community, including a newcomers' packet, a buddy system for students and parents, a tour of the building and a followup to be sure all is going well

Regular mailing of news clips to persons in the community whose names appear in the news

Plans developed for the involvement/communications aspect of each school program

Appropriate sessions held for parents to help them understand each curriculum area

Parents contacted immediately to solicit their support when their children are having trouble

Parents helped to understand their responsibilities in the total education of their children

A plan of action for each public such as the one outlined on the following page will help guide the committee.

Public _____

Involvement Activity

Objectives

Procedures

Who	What	By When

Resources

Evaluation (develop a method for measuring success or failure)

Adapted from AASA National Academy for School Executives School-Community Relations workshop material.

An involvement program calendar will help ensure that activities are planned for appropriate times, that activities do not conflict and that they take place as scheduled. Below is a sample of a partial calendar for a school system. A detailed calendar would include activities going on in each school and the dates scheduled. The following calendar format was adapted from a communications calendar by Shirley P. Williamson, Office of Communication Services, Kentucky Department of Education. It was published in Arizona Department of Education's SCRIPT Handbook.

Involvement Program Calendar

Time	Activity	In charge	Resources
Summer	Involvement planning for the year	Planning committee	*Community Involvement Handbook*
	Design instructional program brochures/flyers	Public information officer and instructional leaders	*Results of Surveys* System print shop or outside vendors
	Develop slide presentation on school system	PIO and planning committee publicity chairperson	System photography department or contracted photographer
	Visit radio and tv stations and newspapers	Committee chairperson	
Aug.-Sept.	In-service program for staff members	Principals, superintendent	
	Staff newsletter	PIO or publicity chairperson	System print shop
	Orientation for kindergarteners	Principals	
	Open House	Individual schools' staff	
Oct.-Nov.-Dec.	Evaluate first month's activities	Committee	
	Christmas concerts at school, in malls	Individual schools	
	Breakfast for business leaders	Principals	
Jan.-Feb.-Mar.	Evaluate previous quarter's activities	Committee	
	Meet with parent advisory group	Superintendent/ committee liaison	
	Community coffees	Principals	
Apr.-May-June	Tours for realtors	PIO or publicity chairperson	
	End of year evaluation	Committee	
	Report to school board	Committee	Surveys
	Needs assessment for next year	Committee	
	Elect new committee officers	Committee	

Action

Plans without ensuing action make no difference. Oftentimes a big breakdown comes between conception and implementation. Administrators can take action to keep the committee's momentum at a steady pace and motivate the group to follow through on ideas.

What's needed to keep the program alive is

A willing ear to listen to ideas. Some brainstorms are new and fresh and seem a little far out but often have merit. Do not be afraid to change the way you are doing things now.

Courtesy and kindness to keep the moral of the group at a peak.

Swift response to questions and other communication

Reward for doing a job well

Fresh new ideas to try

Handy materials and resources

A friendly working atmosphere

Positive Actions For Superintendents

The superintendent does more to set the tone for involvement and cooperation within a school system than does anyone else. Board, staff, students and community often reflect the openness and enthusiasm of the system's chief executive officer. While this list of suggestions is by no means complete, it does include a checklist of items superintendents of schools should consider in making their systems effective in community relations.

Review board policy to assure policy support for a sound system-level involvement program. Adopt and update policies as needed.

Assign a capable person to monitor involvement activities. Make that person a part of the top management team.

Make communications responsibilities part of the job descriptions for all employees. Evaluate employees, in part, on how well they handle those responsibilities.

Ask employees to develop school/community partnership objectives each year and to make improving communication between the two a part of the system's objectives.

Assure that sound involvement plans exist for your system and that each principal has worked with his or her staff on the plan.

Provide in-service training in effective communications for all staff.

Develop effective methods for listening. Responsiveness results from really hearing what people have to say.

Establish regular channels for one-way and two-way communication. Maintain a constant flow of information. Don't wait for a crisis before you start communicating.

Respond promptly and accurately to questions from parents, news media and others.

Become positively involved in community activities that are not school-related and encourage other staff members to do so.

Positive Actions For Principals

Being a principal in today's school is an awesome job. He or she must be an instructional leader, business official, guidance counselor, building manager, as well as principal. A principal is the hub

of the school — every facet of school life begins, comes through or ends in the principal's office.

The principal can make the job easier by having a good relationship with the school community — parents, students, staff. Explaining the role of principal to these groups helps. Better understanding the principal's duties will prompt the school family to be more willing to cooperate, resulting in a better program for all. Other activities can help, too. A principal should also

understand the importance of parent organizations.

become involved in the programs of parent and community service groups.

use every opportunity to speak to parent and community service groups explaining the school program.

arrange for publications concerning the school program to be made available to community members.

offer the services of the principal's office to help arrange the year's program for PTA.

accept invitations to speak or be a panelist on programs of parent and community organizations.

invite parents of all new students to an informal afternoon get-acquainted tea or coffee.

hold an open house early in the school year for the entire community.

use individual parent conferences to give information about the school.

involve as many people as possible on advisory committees, program panels and as chaperones of school activities.

encourage staff members to be active in community affairs.

encourage night activities or programs involving the entire community.

visit feeder schools to speak to students who will be enrolling next term.

arrange an orientation program for all incoming students.

encourage a strong student leadership development program.

advocate a vigorous student council in which the principal is active but not dominant.

offer to write a weekly column for the student newspaper.

encourage students to learn about the operation of the schools through social studies classes.

take time to visit with students in the halls, cafeteria and play areas.

Positive Actions For Board Members

Publicly support the majority of decisions of the board.

Keep what's best for students a number one priority.

Face criticism positively.

Cooperate with those who want board meetings publicized.

Answer questions about board decisions from the press. Speak in terms that will make the issue and consequences clear to them.

Keep properly informed of the operation of the school system.

Communicate well with other members of the board.

Make having a good working relationship with the school superintendent a major objective.

Make it a point to see that community members receive enough information to be kept informed of board activities.

Attend scheduled board meetings and other school functions regularly. Be accessible to those who have questions or want to bring items to your attention.

Listen to all groups who want to talk. Be tactful and diplomatic.

Keep informed of education issues on state and national levels.

Believe that a top-notch school system is a must to serve the community and work toward that goal.

Either support the school system's existing written policies or work in a positive manner to change them.

Periodically evaluate your performance by surveying the people you represent.

Some Words On Communication

More than 90 percent of a community's opinion of its school is based on action — on who school people are and what they do. A small but important percentage is attributed to what they print. So school officials cannot just talk a good game and be successful. They must prove they are good directors by the policies they make and the actions they take. Remember the first PR principle; **do good**. . .then tell about it.

But the telling **is** extremely important because it involves communication, not only written but also verbal and nonverbal. School officials who do a better job of communicating do a better job.

Communication aspects of every involvement activity are important. Each staff member should be an effective communicator. The rules on page 24 serve as a guide to school people who want to communicate well.

Nonverbal Communication

Some things that are not voiced speak louder than words. So administrators should let actions of involvement complement professions of involvement. Superintendents and principals will find the following actions helpful.

Have an open door policy, literally as well as figuratively.

Be accessible in formal as well as informal situations. Be just as responsive in the cafeteria as in your office.

Come out from behind the desk in your office to sit with people sometimes.

Look people in the eye when talking.

Keep your voice well-modulated.

Give your audience your undivided attention. Avoid glancing at your watch or around the room while talking or listening. This is negative communication.

10 Commandments For Better Communications For School Officials

Thou shalt always remember that the public schools are public. They do not belong to any school official.

Thou shalt encourage every school official to treat people as if they were customers. If the voucher system were initiated would enough people choose your school to justify keeping it open?

Thou shalt realize that a sound communications program is more than what most people consider public relations.

Thou shalt recognize the importance of communication in meeting key challenges. For example, communications components play a major role in reducing vandalism, in gaining support for financial needs and in effecting innovations.

Thou shalt always use and insist that all school officials use language that lay people can understand.

Thou shalt emphasize the importance of communications by adopting a written communications policy.

Thou shalt involve the community and staff in identifying communications accomplishments, challenges and needs and in setting goals for the schools.

Thou shalt offer inservice programs for all officials and employees. (Most school administrators and teachers are inadequately prepared for communications responsibilities. Secretaries and custodians are often the main source of taxpayers' impressions of the schools.)

Thou shalt stop and think about the most important ingredients that make a good school. Invariably when this kind of thinking takes place, a better commitment is made to improve communications. This means establishing improved communications as a goal — one that administrators know they will be evaluated on.

Thou shalt be sure to make someone responsible for communications leadership in the district. (Without this kind of leadership, too often the effort fails to receive the impetus needed.)

A reprint: original source unknown

Evaluation

When evaluating the success of a community involvement program, first decide if it did what it was planned to do. Call a meeting of the original planners to discuss and report results of all activities. Collect information which will give a focus on the status of your goals. Use feedback from committee members (personal opinions of whether they think it was worthwhile and whether they would be willing to try it or something similar again) in the evaluation.

Determine the effect on individuals and groups in the community. Compare attitudes of those who have been exposed to the program and those who have not.

To evaluate the results of specific activities or the program as a whole answer these questions.

How well did the program activity work?

Did we focus on goals? Were all activities based on goals?

What did we learn?

Was the program/activity well-planned?

Did it involve key publics? Internal? External?

Did those concerned understand the job to be done?

Did all those involved cooperate by doing their part?

Did we meet our schedules?

Were the results of activities measurable?

Was every targeted public responsive? If not, why not?

Was there enough publicity before, during and after the activity?

How could better provisions have been made for emergency or unforeseen circumstances?

How could results have been more effective?

What steps have been taken to improve future activities of this type?

Did we listen to what others told us?

Would we have been better off to have tried something else? What?

Evaluation techniques must be used to find out things, not prove them. Evaluation is ongoing. It usually leads back to fact finding and feedback — the first step in planning a program. By continuously updating ideas and trying new approaches schools improve public involvement and public attitudes.

An effective involvement plan in either a large or small school system with its many publics is challenging. It requires commitment, planning, hard work and constant monitoring. But payoff in improved school programs, better community attitudes, healthier staff relations and, most important, better educated students is worth far more than the effort it takes to make the plan a success.

GRADE SCALE

95-100 ..... Superior
90-95 ..... Very Good
80-85 ..... Good
70-75 ..... Fair
60-65 ..... Poor
Below 60 ..... Failure

27

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SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPORT CARD for

_____

Complete test inside and compare total with grade scale on back.

School-Community Relations Test

Yes or No *(Score five points for each "yes" answer—Grade scale on back)*

____ 1. Does your school system have a written, board-approved policy on school-community relations?

____ 2. Is community relations a vital part of the overall administration of your school system?

____ 3. Does your school system have a full-time community relations director?

____ 4. Is the director of community relations regularly involved in educational policy discussions?

____ 5. Do the news media and public generally attend board meetings?

____ 6. Does your school board refrain from holding frequent closed or executive sessions?

____ 7. Does your superintendent frequently meet with the news media and citizens?

____ 8. Does your system make a deliberate effort to select the proper message and media to communicate with its various publics, such as students, teachers, parents, taxpayers, businessmen, minority groups and other special interest groups?

____ 9. Are efforts made to formally involve all school system employees in the community relations program?

____ 10. Does your school system continually assess public opinion and consider public attitudes in policy making?

____ 11. Does your school system conduct a continuous information program through the news media, rather than conduct a crash information program to meet one crisis after another?

____ 12. Does this information program use all news media — newspapers, radio and television?

____ 13. Does your school system have an effective means (other than commercial news media) of direct communication with parents and citizens?

____ 14. Does your school system have any formal means of internal communication among board members, administrators, teachers, supporting service personnel and students?

____ 15. Is feedback from these internal groups encouraged and used?

____ 16. Does your school system produce an adequate number of specialized publications during the school year to explain various topics of interest?

____ 17. Does your system's community relations program go beyond conventional publications and news releases by using films, displays, a speakers' bureau, posters and other media?

____ 18. Does your school system have favorable support from local media?

____ 19. Does your school system have favorable public support?

____ 20. Does your school system continually evaluate its community relations effort and work towards necessary improvements?

Involving Your Publics

Teachers

Good PR for Teachers

Teachers must be constantly aware of their community involvement and public relations roles. In every moment, in school and out, their actions and attitudes build a tide of opinion for or against education. Teachers have countless opportunities to enhance or damage the image of schools by their educational philosophies, their classroom performances, their attitudes toward students, parents and the community as a whole, and by their personal lives. Perhaps the longest lasting impression a teacher makes on a student is the example he or she sets.

Of paramount importance to the teacher's role as a person representing the school is the professional image he or she reflects. Teachers must learn public relations techniques which enhance the image of their schools, their professional abilities and their image as persons genuinely concerned about students.

Being accessible and keeping open the lines of communication with the community is a key step. Community members want to know what students are doing, how and why. Teachers can keep those lines open by

- using community people as resource persons in their classes
- Summarizing the day's work with students just before they go home
- making use of community resources to help educate students
- becoming active in civic clubs, parents' groups, churches and other organizations
- speaking positively about what is going on at school publicly and privately
- becoming a member of a professional organization and participating in its events

It can be said that part of a teacher's duties is to do a good job of teaching students, and the other part is to do a good job of letting people know what a good job he or she is doing.

New teachers especially may need extra help with community involvement as well as becoming acquainted with school procedures. (See ***"How to Help Teachers Off to a Good Start,"*** page 87.

Substitute techers play a dual role. They are quasi-members of the school family, and they are community members, viewing and judging the schools as one outside the school structure. They need special treatment. If at all possible, the regular teacher should talk with a substitute ahead of time and let him or her know what to expect. In addition to leaving written instructions on the day's procedures. The regular teacher should also inform students of what to expect, leaving written lesson plans. The teacher should follow up with the substitute and find out how the day went.

School office staff can make a substitute feel welcome by taking a picture and placing it in the lounge with his or her name attached so others will know the new person. Or they could assign a buddy to the teacher, someone to orient him or her to the school and check periodically to see how things are going.

One exercise many administrators have found beneficial is to pose as a substitute teacher for one day. Areas that need improvement can be easily detected this way.

Administrators have also found it helpful to go back to the classroom once a year and teach a class for a week or so. The needs and responsibilities of teachers are kept fresh in their minds as they plan programs for their systems.

Especially for Principals: Hints for Involving Teachers

Have frequent faculty meetings to promote planning and understanding.

- Schedule them for a specific time, e.g., the first and third Wednesday of every month from 3:30-4:40.
- Circulate the agenda before the meeting.
- Do not do all the talking; be aware of the need for having two-way communication.

Make sure your procedures and philosophy in the school are well understood by the faculty.

Have periodic individualized conferences with teachers (other than when you are handling a discipline problem).

Meet informally with teachers, e.g., lunches, coffee.

Compile a handbook for teachers explaining some of your expectations of them; seek their help in its preparation.

Encourage teachers in every way possible to bring their ideas to you.

Parent-Teacher Partnership

Never too much can be said about the importance of the parent-teacher relationship. It is the backbone of public education. Public schools began with this partnership in the forefront, with parents and teachers working together to guarantee children a good education.

Schools have changed and grown as society has, but the parent-teacher partnership is still an extremely vital one.

Who better than a teacher can explain to a parent a child's special learning ability or handicap? Who better than a parent can let the teacher know a child's special needs or problems?

Teachers can do many things to strengthen this partnership. Here are ideas.

Call parents of children who miss school; let them know the student was missed and tell what the assignments are.

Inform parents during the first week of school about important changes or new procedures.

Send a personal note home inviting parents to come by and see student work on display.

Try "let's talk it over" sessions with PTA or room parents. Let them pick the topics.

Encourage fathers to become room parents.

Pay particular attention that your activities do not discriminate against children from one-parent homes.

Tell parents when you are available for calls and encourage them to call.

Help parents tutor their children.

Install a coffee cup rack for parents in the staff lounge. Encourage them to come over and have a cup.

Give disgruntled parents a chance to "sound off" if they are extremely angry or upset. Listen to their complaints.

Become active in PTA, churches or civic groups where parents tend to congregate.

Conduct productive parent-teacher conferences.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

A good parent-teacher conference is based on trust that both parents and teachers have the student's best interest at heart. It is probably the most important means of helping parents realize their vital role in guiding and reinforcing their children's success in school. Below are guidelines teachers can follow to have successful conferences.

What Parents Want to Know

What is my child doing in school?

What are you teaching him or her? How? Is that the best way?

What is your opinion about my child's ability to learn?

What has been my child's progress during this marking period?

How can we help him or her do better?

What is his or her social growth?

How does he or she react to change? Is my child an independent worker?

What are my child's strengths? Weaknesses?

Are there other things I should know about?

What plans can we make to work together?

Teacher's Responsibilities for Good Conferences

Research shows that parents are most interested in knowing about their child's specific weaknesses in reading and math skills, how they can help at home, their child's attitude toward reading, completion of homework or classwork and behavior problems.

Good parent involvement begins with good human relations. Be positive about your programs and about the child's chances for success.

Never make all negative comments without saying some positive things.

Use plain talk during conferences and meetings. If educational jargon is used, explain it.

Establish a feeling of "we're all in this together and together we can make a difference."

Explain homework or home help procedures. Discuss the purpose of homework, how often to look for it and how to help. Mention the importance of providing a quiet place to work and a specific time to study each day. Tell parents to inform you if assignments seem to require an unusual amount of time or help.

Have examples of students' work available. Be sure each piece is dated noting progress.

Don't be evasive. If you can't answer a question, say so.

Don't be afraid to share technical information with parents. Teaching should not be looked upon as a mysterious thing. Technical information and teaching procedures can be understood and used by parents when explained in a clear manner.

Be sure to make conference appointments when parents can come. Use your parent questionnaire sheet (handout) to determine the best time, or you may wish to send home an assignment sheet showing available times and let them sign up. Sometimes, conferences can be set up as part of a general parent involvement meeting.

Strictly follow the alloted time for the conference so that all parents have an equal chance to discuss their children and educational concerns. Sometimes all the assigned time may not be used, and in other cases it may be necessary to schedule another conference because more time is needed. Make this a definate appointment, not a vague "Let's set up another conference soon."

Objectives of a Good Parent Conference

To Give Information

Keep a folder for each child containing samples of work, test results, etc. It is much easier to talk to a parent with something in hand.

A questionnaire can be sent home before the conference asking parents to list any specific questions they wish to discuss about the child, the school or a subject. This will give time to prepare answers and will structure the conference.

Acquaint parents with the goals and philosophy of your remedial program and show them materials used.

Discuss your lesson plans for the child.

Explain school and classroom rules. Give them a list of these if required.

If possible, keep anecdotal notes on students. Jot down any problems or interesting things the child says or does on large index cards. These can be shared at conferences.

To Get Information

Be a good listener. Encourage parents to talk by asking questions such as the following. What does your child think about school? What is his favorite subject? How does he spend his time at home? Who does he play with? What are his responsibilities at home? What problems are you having with homework, etc? This can be a valuable source of information about the child.

Forming a Partnership to Help the Child

Together, the teacher and parent should make a list of the child's strengths and weaknesses.

Together, they choose one specific problem area to work on that is of concern to both.

Together, they list some things both can do to help the child with this one specific problem.

You may wish to form a parent-teacher-child contract outlining specific responsibilities of each. For example, the parent may agree to allot a certain period of time each day to do specific things with the child. The teacher may agree to monitor the progress of the child in this area, keep records of progress and suggest changes if necessary. The child may agree to read or work without complaint for a certain length of time each day at home.

Plan a specific date to follow up results and to begin work on another problem.

Follow up on **all** requests made by parents at conferences.

Evaluate for Improvement

Have an evaluation form which the parent can fill out after the conference. This will let you know how the parent felt about the conference and where you need to improve.

Keep written records of all conferences in the child's folder so you can refer to them at the next conference. Records should be kept of telephone conferences as well.

Always Keep the Lines of Communication Open

Let parents know how their child is doing. Send home a "Happy Gram" when the child has had a very good day. Notify parents immediately when problems arise with schoolwork or behavior and give them suggestions on how to help. It is also nice to send home periodic news bulletins on what is being studied with suggestions for follow up activities at home.

On page 35 is an example of a notice sent home to parents announcing a conference.

Portions of this material on parent-teacher conferences was adopted from Title I workshop materials.

35

Adapted from Mesa Public Schools, Mesa, Arizona

When _____
comes home from school and you ask, "What did you do in school today?" is the answer, "Nuthin' "?

Your parent-teacher conference is on

Date _____

Time _____

Where _____

Teacher _____

Please call us at school if you can't come to the conference we've scheduled. Maybe we can work out a better time for you.

It's Conference Time

Conference time. That's the time twice each year when teachers and parents sit down and talk about kids.

We talk about kids a lot of other times. But parent-teacher conferences are when you, **THE PARENT**, and I, **THE TEACHER**, make an appointment especially to talk about **YOUR CHILD**.

You see, we think all of us, parents and teachers, are educators. We both want what's best for your youngster. And we both have a lot to do with your child's education.

In other words, we're partners. We need to work together. Sitting down at a parent-teacher conference will make us better partners.

I have some things I want to tell you. You probably have some questions you'd like to ask. Because we only have a limited amount of time, we thought you'd like to think about your questions in advance.

We can't cover everything. **But you may want to try some of these questions . . .**

- ___ How is my child doing in math, reading, etc.?
- ___ Do you think my child enjoys your class?
- ___ Has my child shown any special interests or abilities?
- ___ What are his or her dislikes?
- ___ Does my child need close supervision, or can he or she work alone?
- ___ How is the class organized?

- ___ When are children taught in groups? Individually?
- ___ In what group is my child and why?
- ___ What books and materials is my child using?
- ___ Do you feel my child is working as well as can be expected?
- ___ How do you evaluate children's prgress?
- ___ What do your grades on papers and report cards mean?
- ___ If you assign homework, is there any way you want me to help my child with it?
- ___ What kind of discipline is used in your class?
- ___ How does my child react when disciplined?
- ___ Does my child respect the rights and property of others?
- ___ What do you expect of me as the parent of a child in your class?
- ___ How can I help my child learn at home?

Please let us know you'll be joining us at conference time. Fill out the form, clip it and return it to the teacher tomorrow.

I'll see you at our conference on

Date _____

Time _____

Child's name _____

Your signature _____

Students

Parent attitudes toward a school system, its program and especially its teachers are influenced by student attitudes. Students are the real bond between school, home and other parts of the community. Students need to feel they are part of the decisions concerning them and not just followers of various rules and regulations. Teachers play a leading part in making students feel valued as individuals.

Listening helps. Below are several techniques teachers may use to find out what their students think and feel. These activities give students an often-needed chance to express themselves.

Devote the last 15 minutes of the final class period once a week to the airing of students' questions, suggestions and constructive criticism about the school, its operation and activities. Give the principal a written summary of these informal sessions to share with other administrators.

Do you want to know what students think about their school experiences? What their individual problems, interests and needs are? Ask them. Use a **confidential** survey. They will answer questions truthfully if they are sure no one but the teacher will read the answers.

Student Survey

What is now giving you greatest satisfaction?
What do you like most about school? Least?
What is your greatest problem right now?
Of what are you most afraid?

Students, here is a chance to say exactly what you think. Write anything, as long as it expresses your true feelings.

Today I feel _____.

When I have to read I _____.

I get angry when _____.

To be grown up is _____.

My idea of a good time is _____.

I wish my parents _____.

I can't understand why _____.

School is _____.

Teachers can use instructional activities to involve students in home, school and community affairs.

Encourage students to learn about the operation of the school system and its relationship to the community through progress in social studies class.

Students can create a microcommunity. They may be divided into groups representing special interests. Each group will have a say in how the city should develop. Various companies will supply materials for the project.

Study the responsibilities of planning and organizing family life by setting up imaginary classroom families.

Encourage participation in vocational programs that give career practice — internships in local businesses.

Establish an information corps to serve as host to school visitors.

Home economics classes might help with child feeding summer programs. Or they can make up menus for the cafeteria.

Child care classes can provide babysitting services for adult school meetings. Older students can babysit during elections in schools that are po ling places.

Encourage students to join with a community agency in brainstorming ways to cut energy consumption.

A paper or aluminum recycling project in cooperation with the city council is a community-wide project that might interest students.

A school-community cooperation committee, formed to come up with ideas for involvement can share with other schools in the system.

For teachers in self-contained classrooms, spend a few minutes at the end of each day to summarize lessons. Send a summary of lessons home with students so parents can see what their children are learning (once a week is enough for this activity).

Assign homework that requires parent participation.

Set up a dial-a-teacher program. Students can telephone for homework help during certain hours a few days a week. Teachers do not supply answers: they explain concepts and encourage students to find answers. Parents join the activity oftentimes.

Help students get to know the principal as a human being, not an orge.

Take a student home to dinner (one at a time until the whole class has been invited). Ask parents first.

Praise students for doing a good job. Recognize their accomplishments.

Be careful to avoid using words or expressions which offend individuals or groups of students.

Get students out of the classrooms and into the community through field trips and special projects.

Make learning interesting. Don't bore your students.

Administrators can improve student-school-community relations by

holding regular meetings of student leaders. Listen to them. Follow through on requests. Answer questions truthfully.

updating students on school matters. Ask for their ideas and opinions.

encouraging strong student leadership program emphasizing community commitment.

making students members of a system's speaker's bureau. Do not use all honor students. Use a cross-section.

advocating a strong, vigorous student government association.

taking time to visit with students in halls, lunchrooms and recreation areas.

developing a buddy system for new students. This makes the transition easier. Assign a returning student to welcome the new buddy and orient him/her to the school.

orienting students and parents from feeder school or prospective kindergartners. This includes a tour, explanation of educational program and, for kindergartners, a half-day session of school with normal activities.

developing school pride. Start a beautification project. Parents may join in too. Vandalism is often reduced.

Holding regular parent teacher student meetings.

School Staff

Personal experiences with a school determine the feelings people have toward the school and its staff. From the custodian who keeps the grounds neat and clean to the principal who sets policy and directs staff and students — the whole school family contributes to its image in the community. They are a team and should work together as one.

Hints for Involving Nonprofessional Staff

Make custodial, secretarial, food service and other workers know they are a part of the team — their ideas are valued and their involvement is welcomed.

Invite the entire staff to meetings occasionally, especially when decisions are being made that will affect everyone.

Have handbooks for bus drivers, custodians and others to explain how they fit into the team and what the school expects of them.

Have bus drivers work with you in making codes of student conduct that will apply on buses.

Encourage everyone to use courtesy titles when addressing all staff members.

Give secretaries as much responsibility as they are able to handle effectively. Capitalize on their talents.

Have school food staff orient new students to the cafeteria.

Inform staff of new developments and procedures in the operation of the school, in instructional areas, etc.

Make sure they get copies of newsletters. Solicit their input for newsletters.

Sponsor a staff appreciation day once a year.

Sponsor a staff member of the month contest. Allow the whole school community to nominate and vote for the candidates. Feature the winner in the school newsletter.

Encourage staff members who have children in school to become part of the PTA or other parents' groups.

Encourage staff to become involved in community activities. Their visibility in the community is a plus for the school.

Start an "In My Shoes" job exchange program. Allow a few teachers to spend a day with the superintendent, or school food staff to spend a day with teachers. Or let a teacher spend the morning with the custodian. A better understanding of each other and each's function in the system will result.

Let your whole staff become part-time information officers by distributing a news tip sheet similar to the one on page 41 . If your system does not have a public information officer, put someone in charge of collecting the sheets and contacting the media or school newsletter editor. A volunteer might like this job.

Survival Kit of Frequently Needed Facts and Information for School Officials

There is certain information such as enrollment figures and dates of school activities that reporters, parents and other citizens frequently seek from the school office. The efficient secretary collects this information into a central file or looseleaf binder so that it is available for any caller. It creates a favorable image of the school when the secretary or any other member of the school staff can immediately produce the requested information without having to say that he or she will obtain it and call the person back. The "survival kit" includes the following.

- school calendar
- statistics on finances and taxes
- enrollment figures for various school populations
- basics of the grading system
- directory of all school personnel including areas of responsibility
- list of school board members with telephone numbers and addresses
- bus schedules
- school policies and regulations
- map of the town or city
- crisis communication plan detailing who should be called in various situations
- list of officers of PTA and other school organizations
- special programs (gifted, handicapped, Title I, Headstart)
- transfer requirements
- school health rules

SCHOOL SYSTEM NAME

TIP SHEET

Your name _____

Work phone _____ Home phone _____

School/Department _____

Date _____

THERE'S A NEWS STORY HERE .....

- ☐ for external publicaton
- ☐ for school system newsletter (check one or both)

WHO

WHAT

WHEN

WHERE

WHY

HOW

PHOTO SUGGESTION

FOLD, STAPLE AND MAIL TO THE
COMMUNITY RELATIONS OFFICE THROUGH INTERSCHOOL MAIL.

Adapted from tipsheet of Mesa Public Schools, Mesa, Arizona.

Parents

Parents with children who attend public schools usually know more about public education and are more interested in the schools than those who are not involved. When trying to get parents to help out in the school/community partnership, target all parent categories. At the head of the list are those with children in school, but it is good also to work with those whose children have completed school so that you get a clear picture of community attitudes about the value of an education from your system. Other special parent categories include minority groups, working mothers, one-parent families, financially disadvantaged families, non-English speaking families and parents with gifted or handicapped children. Each nas unique needs, and it will require some thought and planning to meet them.

A parent's main interest is his or her own children. So it is important for parents and teachers to get together to discuss each child's needs. Teachers serve as a primary medium of news and information about children, and so they should. Parents need to get more news about their children from teachers than any other source, newspapers, radio and television included.

That is why parent-teacher conferences are so important. The child has a chance at a better education when parents and teachers reinforce learning. It helps tremendously for parents to be aware that they have a big responsibility toward their child and toward the school. Before setting up parent-teacher conferences, let parents know they have certain responsibilities to ensure a productive meeting.

Parent Responsibilities

- Before the conference, make a list of things you wish to know about your child.
- Bring any necessary information about your child which will help the teacher.
- Be a good listener.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions about things you do not understand.
- Be sure to ask about the reading and math programs and look at copies of textbooks and other materials.
- Show an interest and desire to help.

Parent Volunteers

Volunteer jobs are outlets for parent participation in school activities. Parents can perform the following.

- Construct learning centers in classrooms.
- Make picture files using magazines to be used as resource materials.
- Make a scrapbook of school history.
- Serve on telephone calling committees for school projects.
- Assist in special clinics, library or counseling areas.
- Become tutorial or teachers' aides.
- Serve as liaison between teachers and students.
- Share special talents on career days.
- Chaperone field trips.

Volunteer activities for parents are limited only by the degree of interest exhibited by the teachers, staff and administrators. Seek out the parents who never participate. Sometimes they feel inadequate or shy and simply need to be encouraged.

Parent Groups

Parent groups can be a big help to schools, giving support and cooperation in implementing many ideas and projects. They also serve as a support system among parents and as a liaison between teachers and students. The principal should become involved in programs of parents' groups to show his or her interest in giving students quality education.

Advisory Groups and Committees

School committees, made up of parents and nonparents, play a big role in school affairs. Local people who work together to identify needs and resources, plan programs of action and services to solve the community's problems are needed by schools. But it must be clear to these groups that they serve as advisors, not decision makers.

Advisory groups should be in constant communication with school officials. They should not be a crisis resource only. Administrators are responsible for communicating which actions are taken on the recommendations they receive from these groups.

Advisory groups can be used effectively to review the building budget and the curriculum and help plan school communication programs.

Special Events For Parents

Invite a few parents to a coffee hour with the principal. Have it at school or in the home of a parent leader.

Vary the times for open houses. Hold some in the afternoon, some at night.

Let students prepare a luncheon for parents, teachers and themselves. Send handwritten invitations.

Have a father-son breakfast.

Hold a mother-daughter tea, including a fashion show with some home economics students modeling their outfits.

Invite parents to eat breakfast or lunch with their children at the school cafeteria.

Invite several parents to sample the school lunch once a month. Seat them with the principal, a teacher and several randomly selected students.

Arrange athletic and academic contests between parents and teachers.

Hold high school department seminars for parents to help their children gain the most from course offerings.

Establish open office hours at least once a week so parents who need to talk to administrators have access to them.

Provide a parent room in the school which is kept open during the school day. Parents may check out materials and exchange ideas. This room can contain resources and ideas to help parents reinforce learning in preschool and elementary school children.

Workshops, newsletters and tip sheets on nutrition education show how parents can become interested in school food and nutrition programs.

Establish a homework hotline for parents to check on nightly assignments.

Hold high school department seminars for parents to help them help their children gain the most out of particular course offerings.

Encourage parents to praise their child's successes.

Have parents call the teachers sometimes rather than waiting for the teacher to contact the parents.

Set up an idea exchange in the school newsletter. Ask parents to send in ideas. Then, in a later issue of the paper, publish the ideas and how they were used.

Don't forget to include fathers in all school communications. In fact, some fathers might like to be room parents or sponsors.

Involve parents in discussions about junior high school while their children are still in elementary school. Do the same for junior high parents before their children reach senior high.

Create a "How Parents Can Help" handbook which gives practical suggestions for home activities, such as making out grocery lists, nature walks, etc.

Send home the parent contract on the following page for parents to sign at the beginning of the school year.

From Title I workshop materials.

Parent Contract

I feel that education is a team effort and will work to do my part in the education of my children. As a parent, here are some things I agree to do.

- ☐ Take a genuine interest in my child. I will talk with and listen to my child daily, to provide support and encouragement.
- ☐ Be sure my child gets plenty of rest, regular nutritious meals and develops good health habits.
- ☐ Help my child develop a positive attitude about school, learning, life and self.
- ☐ Support the school by getting to know my child's teacher, learning about school programs and helping in any way I can.
- ☐ Teach my child the basics of good citizenship and a moral code, including trust, respect, responsibility and honesty.
- ☐ Encourage pride in our school, community, state and nation.
- ☐ Provide tasks and responsibilities at home which will help my child develop an even greater sense of responsibility.
- ☐ Become interested and involved in school and community activities and attend school functions.
- ☐ Let the teacher know of any problems outside school which might affect my child's school work.
- ☐ Support the school in its efforts to maintain proper discipline.
- ☐ Supervise my children, know where they are and maintain healthy discipline.
- ☐ Provide enjoyable and interesting family learning experiences through travel, playing games together, having picnics, camping, attending movies, the symphony, going shopping together and so on.
- ☐ Be aware of the television programs my child is watching and set limits on the total amount of time spent watching television.
- ☐ Set an example by reading to my child and letting my child see me reading for both fun and learning.
- ☐ Take a certain amount of quiet time each day for myself. During that time I will be thankful for my children and all my other blessings.
- ☐ Give my children at least one hug a day and let them know how much we love them.

_____

Parent

_____

Your child's name

Adapted from the contract of Paddock Road Elementary School, District 66, Omaha, Nebraska.

Nonparents

Lower enrollments, fewer public school parents and more single adults and couples without school-age children mean schools can no longer communicate only with parents, staff and students. Programs have to include some major efforts to let nonparents know what schools are doing and how — and why.

Nonparents are perhaps the most overlooked and most difficult of all community groups to reach. This group includes older people, couples without children, young single adults and those young people who have dropped out of school and stayed in the community. Appealing to these individuals can be a tremendous challenge.

Reach nonparents and get their support through community education. Offer enrichment classes covering a wide range of interest to let them know there is something for them in the schools. Classes can be tailored to fit the needs of specific groups.

- Single parents will respond to classes that teach child care, financial planning and how to cope with new life situations (separation, divorce, death in the family).
- Adults like classes of crafts, taxes, basic car care and special field trips.
- Adults who want to learn a new job or displaced homemakers who wish to enter or reenter the work force appreciate vocational counseling and skills development classes which help them meet their needs.
- Small businesses benefit from programs for retraining personnel or updating skills.
- General classes in metrics, speed reading, exercise and dance, cooking, plant care, dog training, home maintenance and furniture refinishing can be offered too.

Often the best way to change negative attitudes is to involve people in positive activities. Get help from the community in staffing community education programs. Recruit instructors through newspapers, radio, school newsletters and business and community agencies.

Remind nonparents that education is everyone's business. Promote the idea that schools belong to them by allowing and encouraging citizen use of school facilities. Encourage all nonparents to become school volunteers.

Ways to Communicate with Nonparents

Get their attention by taking your messages to them. Place a large announcement board outside the school to carry frequently changed messages of good news about the school.

Mail (or hand deliver in small school systems) publications concerning the school system to all residents three or four times a year.

Involve nonparents in school and district advisory groups, task forces, evaluation teams and other activities.

Include nonparents as resource persons and volunteers in the schools. Present them with a certificate for their work.

Listen to the total community through surveys and other channels — newspapers, radio, TV.

Establish a speakers' bureau to tell the school system's story to the total community.

Focus your communication on topics that all citizens need to understand better.

Involve the entire school staff in reaching nonparents with school news.

Attend civic club meetings and tell your school's story. Encourage other staff members to do the same.

Establish a group of "key communicators" and keep them well informed about school concerns.

Starting A Key Communicator Program

In every community there are people who regularly talk to large numbers of people in their daily jobs and daily contacts. These people do not always have children in school, but many are at the top of the communication pyramid in the community. Many of these people are believed and trusted by others, which can make them valuable to the school as key communicators. Some may be doctors or nurses. Others may be bartenders, beauticians or barbers. Others might be retired people who want to remain active in the community, so they spend many minutes a day talking with others about community topics.

Key communicators help administrators know what's going on in the community. Anytime one hears a rumor about the school, he or she lets the school official know about it at once. As a result rumors are stopped before they get out of hand.

Dr. Don Bagin, Professor and Communications Coordinator in the Program for School Public Relations at Glassboro State College, Glassboro, New Jersey, and President of the National School Public Relations Association, formalized the key communicator concept. Following is Bagin's description of the program.

Key Communicators

The concept of "key communicators" is probably not an innovative one for some school officials. Many educators have applied the ideas behind the key communicator approach in their schools. Few, however, have formalized it in the manner suggested here.

Why do we need key communicators?

Too often in almost every community rumors get out of hand. In many cases, such rumors, although unfounded, have resulted in the dismissal of school administrators. Usually the rumors could have been quickly ended in their early stages. However, in too many cases, the rumors grew and grew, causing what was a spark to become a raging fire. One example that occured a few years ago in a suburban district located near a ghetto demonstrates the need for key communicators.

What can happen without key communicators?

Ten people appeared at the superintendent's office. They brought a petition signed by 1200 people — a petition protesting and opposing the plans to bus children from that district (which was upper middle class) to a nearby city school district. They brought reporters and a TV cameraman with them. The superintendent was surprised. He had no inkling that there was such community concern. In fact, he did not know that the petition was being circulated. The media, of course, had a page one story, even though the superintendent candidly denied that any such plans had been discussed. (And this was the truth.) One person had misconstrued a statement made by another school official and the rumor spread. Not one of the 1200 people signing the petition talked with anyone from the school to get the facts. All, it appears, assumed the petition statement was correct.

Are there examples of the key communicators' idea working?

Many school administrators are glad to share their successes as a result of implementing the key communicator concept. Here are examples from three communities.

Example One

A black ninth grade student and a white ninth grade student fought in the junior high school building during the school day. The black student was suspended; the white student was not. Given just those facts, the community justifiably could have been upset; in fact, a riot could have ensued. The additional facts were that the black student had engaged in two previous fights and he and his parents had been told that one more fight would necessitate suspension. The fight was the first for the other student.

The key communicators helped the principal avoid any problems as they were told the facts and they shared them with the people they talked with.

Example Two

A senior on the night of the senior prom was seen trying to climb the left field wall of the high school baseball field — at midnight — in his tux. This was considered unusual for that community, and the rumors would probably have had the entire class on an LSD trip. Only the one student was on such a trip, however.

The key communicators communicated that fact to the rest of the community, thereby avoiding what could have been a major problem for school administrators and for students in homes throughout the district.

Example Three

The day before a tax levy election in a county school district, the county newspaper ran an accurate article that was given page-one position. The article was favorable in showing the district's

needs in a fair manner but the headline was totally misleading.

School officials didn't have time to prepare a formal response of any kind. Furthermore, they did not want to alienate the newspaper by complaining about the poor headline.

Key communicators came into play here by spreading the word that the story and its salient points were excellent, but that the headline was misleading. Facts were provided to the key communicators, showing how the headline was inconsistent with the facts in the story. Also provided was some brief background on the time pressures of preparing a headline that must fit a certain space.

How did the information get to the key communicators?

An administrator is charged with the responsibility of communicating with the key communicators on a district-wide basis. This administrator began a telephone chain that had been established for this purpose. When time permits, a written statement can be distributed.

Are key communicators for district-wide use or should they be set up on a school basis?

Both ways work. Some school districts do it strictly through the superintendent's office. In this case, principals are usually asked to help identify people who can serve as key communicators. In other districts, each principal is responsible for setting up a key communicator network. It is of course possible for the superintendent to identify his key communicator group from members of the principals' groups.

What kind of a person should a key communicator be?

Any person who talks to a large number of people should be considered for key communicator designation. If the person is believed and trusted by large numbers of people, that person should definitely be asked to serve. The person need not have the usual formal power-structure kind of status that we too often seek for school help. The person might be a barber, a beautician or a bartender. The person might own a hoagie shop or be a school crossing guard. Or a postmaster or a gas station operator. In any event, he or she should be talking to a large number of people in the community.

It's important to identify key communicators who will talk to all the different segments of the community. In some communities, it might be difficult to identify key communicators, especially in new developments that have not yet evolved their power structure. In this case, people can be asked to serve as key communicators to tell the school story and to report rumors. Usually the people do then become key communicators in that development.

Should there be key communicators in the schools?

Definitely. A group of student and staff key communicators can add much to the overall communications effort. As shown in study after study, students and employees are prime sources of information about the schools. Therefore, it's imperative that all who are in the school know the facts before they return home to share their information with other people. Again, these people should be chosen in a way that assures getting the word to all segments of the student body and the staff.

In addition to using key communicators to spread the facts, how can they help?

Key communicators can identify the sparks before they become fires. Members of the group must be encouraged to call school officials with questions they have. Or with questions or concerns they have heard from neighbors, friends or customers.

For example, Harry the Barber might be told by a customer that the proposed new high school is going to cost $10 million. Harry calls the superintendent and finds that the cost will be $7 million. How many people will Harry help know the facts? How many people will the people Harry told tell? It's going to help.

Key communicators must have the right to call the administrator with whom they are working with a rumor or question. This kind of freedom, although now technically available to all people, must be clearly communicated.

Some school districts call a meeting of key communicators before making a major decision. Some use the group to get ideas and reactions before presenting a budget or a bond issue to the remainder of the community. Some get the group's thinking on issues like busing and the extended school year before going to the rest of the community.

In fact, one of the ongoing bonuses is the ability to get the pulse of the community rather quickly by asking the key communicators their opinions regarding almost any educational issue.

Doesn't setting up the key communicators take time?

Of course it does. In fact, most administrators are reluctant to take the time because they understandably see it subtracting from the already limited time they have for other responsibilities. At the end of a year, however, almost all administrators agree that the existence of the key communicators saves more time than it takes. Major crises have been eliminated and people now get the facts before criticizing the schools, administrators report.

How does a school start the key communicators idea?

If the superintendent decides to begin such a program, ordinarily a list of people would be compiled by various employees independently. A demographic look at the community would be taken to make sure that various groups would have someone on the list. The lists would be considered and people chosen. Usually the same names appear on many lists.

The superintendent then sends a letter to each person advising that the person has been selected and explaining the nature of the organization — to help improve schools through better communication. The superintendent then calls each member and invites him or her to a small-group meeting with about seven other key communicators.

The personal phone call usually brings from 85 percent to 95 percent attendance. The secretary's phone call usually results in about 60 percent to 75 percent attendance and the letter only will usually attract about half the people invited.

At the luncheon or other get-together, the tone is informal. No formal agenda is prepared and the time pressures of all involved are respected. This means that the meeting is held to 60 or 75 minutes at the most. People get to know the superintendent and the superintendent gets to know them. It's really a confidence-building session that allows people to see that the chief executive is a person who cares about kids, understands that problems exist, and seems to be doing the best possible job to solve them. Also, that the superinendent is receptive to ideas and encourages questions and suggestions. People are asked to call when they hear a rumor and are told that they will be apprised of information about the schools when a problem or challenge or need exists.

Perhaps once a year, the entire group of key communicators will be called together for a meeting (budget or bond issue or test score results consideration). This enables them to see that other people in the community care enough about the school to give time to help communicate.

(The ideas given above can be used by a principal to set up the key communicators in a school.)

How many people should be on such a team?

It varies from district to district. Some small districts might use only 15 or 20 people. Others may use 20 people for each school. The number is not the key; if, for instance, a person feels slighted and wants to be a member, add one more. Every person can help in some way. It is unusual that a person who gets involved in the schools in this way does not aid the school's program either directly or indirectly.

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In an age of a lack of public confidence in public officials, any attempt to communicate honestly and openly will be applauded. This program can do just that. More important, it can help improve education.

Contributed by Dr. Don Bagin, Professor of Communications, Glassboro State College, Glassboro, N.J.

Senior Citizens

Senior citizens are often willing to become involved in volunteer work for the schools, but just as often school officials might not think to ask them.

Getting involved in school/community relations gives older people a renewed feeling of self-worth, stimulates pride and helps bridge the generation gap.

Senior citizens can participate in schools by arranging special contacts with children.

Grandparent day or adopt-a-grandparent — Students are encouraged to bring an older neighbor as a foster grandparent if their own grandparents live too far away to come.

Guest lecturers — Older persons can give an oral history of the region as an enrichment exercise to teach and preserve our past heritage. They can tell children what life was like when they were school students.

Golden age activity cards can be offered to all members of the community 65 years old or older. These cards recognize their years of service to the students and community and entitle them to attend all school athletic, musical and dramatic programs free of charge. With these cards they will also get lunches at a reduced rate.

Senior citizen's day is a special event at school for grandparents and other older friends of the community, especially by including those living in retirement complexes. Provide transportation for them to come in for a special morning of classes and lunch.

Provide a special room at school for a senior citizen drop-in center with comfortable chairs, TV, games and books to interest them. Colorful pictures and plants will make a cheerful and welcome atmosphere.

During the year invite all local senior citizens to special activities, school visits and programs at the school. Sponsor some short bus trips that they will enjoy.

Senior citizens can be used in almost any volunteer job within their interests and capabilities.

Some suggestion for volunteer positions —

- Cafeteria helpers
- Safety committee
- Parent stand-ins for working mothers *(Babysitting after school or as a contact person for children to be able to depend on while mothers are away.)*
- Good will ambassadors for the schools within the community
- Key communicators

Business and Industry

To meet the changing life styles in today's society and to prepare for tomorrow's technological needs, business and industry must become more involved in public education. Business executives working hand in hand with educators can establish effective programs which help students. Not only will students benefit by learning to be effective and productive members of society, but businesses will gain more interest in education improvement at the local level. Another important plus of the school/business partnership often derives from part-time employment for students. Work teaches students about the world of work and helps them accept their active role in the community.

Adopt-a-School programs have been successful in involving business and industry in education. Corporations or small businesses which adopt schools supply volunteers, sponsor activities, fund materials, equipment or scholarships and provide enrichment. Schools which want to be adopted send letters to business leaders in the community, outlining the plan and asking if their companies would like to participate. Each adopting company agrees to help with a specific activity or program such as tutoring, donating equipment, beautifying the school grounds or sponsoring scholarships for academic achievement.

A company volunteer lines up interested employees to help with the projects. Management allows participating employees time off work to help with activities.

Small local merchants may not be able to tackle the responsibility of sponsoring a whole school, but they can offer prizes or scholarships for achievement or volunteer to take care of one specific activity within their personnel capability.

Realtors are important for the part they play in selling schools as well as homes. Often the real estate salesperson is the first to talk with newcomers about schools, so he or she should be well-informed. Seminars and school tours are good ways to provide realtors with the kind of positive information they need.

Perhaps an early morning meeting, a breakfast workshop, is exactly the kind of activity that would interest and motivate realtors to become more involved in selling the schools. Meet with the heads of your local board of realtors ahead of time and let them know how important schools are to their business. Set up a workshop session. Let teachers explain their programs. Emphasize your school's strong points. A systemwide bus tour for realtors is another good idea. Let them see the boundaries the school system covers. Make stops along the way to show them exemplary programs.

Involve business leaders in the classroom. Set up a two-way conference telephone call so industrial experts outside the local area can conduct lectures or discussions with your classes. Or have executives teach minicourses, giving students the latest available knowledge in their fields.

Use board meetings to spotlight prominent business leaders who support the schools. Making a phone call or sending a personal note thanking these people will have positive effects. Send an article to the newspapers concerning their contributions. Send clippings to the person's place of work.

Encourage the participation of target business groups. Many organizations have their own newsletters and might feature school news sometimes.

Contact businesses connected with travel and vacation such as airlines, railroads, bus companies, gas stations, motels, resorts and fast food restaurants and get them involved in a related school project.

Political groups can help enrich civics and political science classes.

News Media

Although news media should be a primary source for reaching all your publics, treating them as a separate public often enhances the good press schools receive. Doing things which cultivate the relationship with news reporters, radio and television stations is an important part of community involvement.

All media are receptive to education news if it is sensational, if it involves exciting new developments, if it has human interest value — in short, if it is the kind of information that creates a sharp impact on the listening, reading or viewing public. It stands to reason the more interesting the activities going on in a school system, the more likely they are to receive press coverage.

However, having newsworthy happenings going on in schools does not guarantee media participation. The media must first of all know these things are taking place, and administrators are the ones to tell them. News releases, news tip sheets, telephone calls, radio and television public service announcements get the word out.

Personalizing your school system, i.e., getting to know reporters and media representatives in your community, becoming aware of many facets of their operations and working closely with them in informing the community of school happenings, usually results in more positive media coverage.

Public information officers in school systems have proved invaluable in positively involving the media — in handling questions and inquiries and in generating ideas for positive stories about education.

On the following pages are guidelines to observe when trying to get news media interested and positively involved in local schools.

Guidelines for Good Press Relations

From Gary Marx, formerly Director of Communications Services, The Jefferson County Public Schools, 1209 Quail Street, Lakewood, Colorado 80215 — 303-231-2446

The public schools of our nation are institutions in a democratic society. And, any public institution in a democratic society draws its very legitimacy from open, honest, two-way communication with its many publics. Those who are taxpayers in the community actually own the institution and the information it generates. The news media represent one of the important channels for communication with the community. Here are guidelines for working effectively with news media representatives:

1. Meet with news media representatives. Call to determine who the key people are, including: the news editor or news director, public service director, education editor, sports editor, and so on. Have coffee or lunch and find out how you can best meet their informational needs.
2. Develop attractive news release and public service forms to carry information on a regular basis to your press list, public service list, sports list, etc.
3. Don't be defensive. Defensiveness is often taken as a sign of guilt. If you can answer a reporter's question, do so honestly.
4. When a reporter calls, respond promptly. If you will be out, be sure a system is established for handling news media inquiries.
5. If news media personnel can't make it to cover a story, offer to drop some notes off at the newspaper, or provide a telephonic report for radio stations.
6. Keep in mind that all reports and surveys are public property. You must provide this type of data to the news media, if it is requested. Rough drafts, working papers, and preliminary figures are not necessarily included.
7. Be aware of deadlines. A story is of little use if you've missed the deadline and it has become old news. Weekly papers have fixed deadlines, as do dailies. Radio can take a story almost anytime the newsroom is operating. Television is also becoming more of an instant medium, but for film and tape, still requires time for processing and editing.
8. Avoid educational jargon. If you use it, explain it.
9. If you don't have the answer, it's OK to say, "I don't know for sure, but I'll call you back in 10 minutes."
10. While you may wish to pick your own time for publicity, a reporter may often want to do an advance story. An advance may actually mean greater interest when the program is fully developed and release had been planned.
11. If your information includes complex numbers and figues, round them off.
12. Nothing is ever "off the record." While you may ask a reporter not to print or broadcast certain information, he or she may proceed to obtain the same information from another source. This does not mean that reporters should not be briefed and taken into your confidence. Most will respect your desire to hold on a story, temporarily.
13. Hold few news conferences and only when warranted. Prior to opening the news conference for questions get to know the reporters present, introduce those who are featured in the conference and make a short introductory statement containing the essence of what you want people to remember.
14. Never ask a reporter to show you a story before it is published.

15. Set up a good internal reporting system. A good backlog of story possibilities may be just what a reporter needs on a slow news day.

16. Establish a Communications Advisory Group including news media representatives to advise you on the handling of various problems involving communication.

17. When sitting down for a personal interview with a reporter, visit awhile. Express your point of view and what you would like people to understand.

18. Never say, "No Comment."

19. If a reporter calls, don't transfer him or her to a long-shot possibility for an answer. Call back to let the reporter know who actually has the needed information or obtain it and pass it along yourself.

20. After an interview, let those people know about it who need to know. This approach avoids conflicting information.

21. And, if a reporter has done what you consider a good job, don't forget to say THANK YOU!

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A tip from the Georgia School Public Relations Association (GSPRA):

What can you do if you are misquoted or if there is some mistake in a published story? Generally, if nobody is hurt by the mistake, do nothing. If the mistake is a serious one, you have three options. (1) Call the reporter and explain what he or she did wrong; that way the mistake won't be repeated in later stories; (2) send a calm letter to the editor; (3) call the reporter's boss. Always discuss this kind of situation with the system information officer before taking action.

Working With Volunteers

Volunteers are the heart of a school/community relations program. These people give their time and talents to the school because they want to see the schools and the students prosper. Volunteers encompass every age group, every social and economic status.

Volunteer services can be used in many ways. A volunteer can help with tutoring or give basic skills instruction. A volunteer can be a classroom assistant or bus stop monitor, a storyteller or school clinic aide. The possibilities are limited only by the interest of the volunteers, the cooperation of the staff and your school system's rules and regulations.

Important Facts about School Volunteers

Qualifications

A genuine interest in students

Likes people

A pleasing personality

Ability to relate well to others

Willingness to accept responsibility for assigned tasks

Time to devote to the school

Ability to follow directions

Demonstrates good judgment and tact

A well-groomed appearance

Patience

Respect for others

Dependability

Awareness of the importance of time

An effective volunteer is also openminded, enthusiastic, willing, helpful, supportive of the program, motivated, creative, warm and caring, a good adult model for children.

Benefits

Volunteering benefits everyone students, school, community and the volunteers themselves.

Students will have the advantage of more individual attention in a variety of learning experiences which may not otherwise be available. Positive thinking volunteers can help students improve their attitudes about education and give them greater incentives toward being useful community members.

Without volunteers to give that "something extra" to students, schools would be greatly handicapped. Many needed services can be provided by volunteers without added cost and will free already overburdened teachers to concentrate on classroom instruction.

An effective volunteer program also encourages community support and parental cooperation. Public confidence and pride are bolstered by the knowledge that respected members of the community think enough of the schools and educational values to give their time, energies, talents and devotion. In the long run community spirit is improved by better quality education for its youth.

Volunteers will feel a sense of pride in sharing their knowledge and talents to help others. They will feel needed and valued in the community by knowing that their efforts are doing so much to enrich the students' education. This will also increase their interest in improving the schools. In addition volunteers will learn new skills, gain new experiences and make new friends.

Responsibilities

Become familiar with the school program and follow the school rules.

Establish good rapport with personnel and keep communication lines open.

Do your best in the job given and in the best possible way.

Give supplemental help to individuals and small groups.

Be a team member of the school staff.

Give frequent feedback to principal or school volunteer contact person about your assignment.

Keep interest high with preplanning activities.

Keep records about your job.

Much of the material in this section was adapted or taken directly from Get Involved for the Schools (GIFTS) Handbook for Implementation, Colquitt County Schools. *Reprinted with permission of the producers.*

Helpful Tips

Plan your work and work your plan.

Learn the names of the students you are helping.

Keep control of your group or class.

Let your presence be known by the quality of your service.

Report all unusual problems to your immediate supervisor or principal.

Let your students know that you really care about them.

Getting a Volunteer Program Started

The main reason for organizing a volunteer program is to help students through the cooperative efforts of the volunteers, school staff and teachers. After you see a need for extra help in your school, you will want to have a meeting for all potential volunteers to talk about your objectives and pinpoint the interests and abilities of each volunteer.

Analyze

In developing the volunteer program consider the following guidelines.

Needs of the school system, of each individual school and of each individual teacher

School staff's level of commitment for community involvement

Availability of qualified volunteers to meet the school's needs

Types of special help already available in the school

Availability of school personnel to give supervision of the volunteer

Availability of space and materials

The first step in organizing a volunteer program is to analyze the needs of your school and teachers. Do teachers, staff members and school clubs want and need volunteers? Let it be their choice. Assign volunteers to those who are enthusiastic about the idea. What type of services are needed and how can volunteers help in these areas? Are there community members who are willing to volunteer their time? When? How? Survey to find out. The responses should let you know what type volunteer services you should aim for — classroom only, lunchroom, clerical and after school programs, special projects only, etc. (See samle request for volunteer services, page 69.)

Choose a Volunteer Coordinator

Choose a volunteer coordinator to head the project. This person will be responsible for matching the right volunteer with the right job and seeing that the whole program runs smoothly.

Recruit

Parents of school children are an obvious choice for volunteer jobs. Enthusiastic parents can encourage other people in the community to join them. Volunteer recruiters and staff members can make personal contacts in libraries, grocery stores, offices and other community locations. Newcomers can be told that volunteering is a good way to make contacts in their new community. Perhaps the local welcome wagon hostess would be willing to discuss this idea with them. Opportunities for recruiting volunteers can also be found at all sorts of neighborhood functions —PTA meetings, school fairs, club and service organization meetings. Don't overlook the possibilities of public service announcements provided by the news media in drawing interested community citizens into volunteer help. (See sample recruitment letter and questionnaire, pages 67-68.)

Orient and Train

The success of the whole program depends on thorough orientation and training of volunteers. Otherwise, well-meaning but poorly prepared volunteers will be ineffective. Hold training sessions and clearly define their duties and responsibilities. Give them copies of school rules and regulations, discipline policies, dress codes, etc. Tell the volunteers about staff roles. Help volunteers feel welcome and feel like team members by providing information, advice and assistance when needed.

The following is a suggested outline for a volunteer orientation session.

- Welcome and introduction
  Volunteer coordinator
  School principal
- Philosophy of volunteering

- Purpose and objectives of the program
- Overview of community
- Channels of communications
- School policies
- Roles and responsibilities of the volunteers
- Assignment of duties

Many people need to help in the orientation and training of new volunteers — curriculum directors, community resource personnel, existing volunteers and other resource people. In addition volunteers get supervision from those who have had training in the best use of volunteer services.

A successful volunteer is well-informed. The orientation session should acquaint the volunteer with the policies, procedures and goals of the program and provide the opportunity for questions and answers.

Orientation sessions should be arranged to suit the interest and convenience of the individual volunteers and the roles they are to serve. Sessions should be short and include many visual aids. They should also be small enough for group interaction.

While orientation involves introduction to the school, its policies, plans and goals, training sessions are for teaching specific skills to the volunteers.

- Keep training practical and to the point.
- Be flexible.
- Stress communications skills.
- Use good visual aids as well as written materials.
- Use experienced volunteers to help train new volunteers.
- Use both school and community resources for training.
- Plan follow-up sessions after volunteers have been working a month or two.
- Allow for evaluation and feedback following the session and use what you learn for further planning.

Evaluate

Ask teachers and staff members to evaluate volunteers' activities. This can be done at a regular staff meeting with a short questionnaire.

"Did you like it?"
"Would you like to do it again?"
"Was your volunteer satisfactory?"
"Do you have any suggestions?"

Teachers could ask students how the class felt about a volunteer project. Volunteers might even find a self-evaluation useful. Evaluate individual volunteers for your own records.

Evaluation should also cover the following topics.

- Active volunteers/inactive
- Number of days served
- Number of hours contributed
- Number of students served per week
- Subject areas served
- Reason for leaving the program

Give Recognition

Volunteers must be made to feel the importance of their role and should receive recognition for their dedication. If volunteers feel their work is meaningful and they can see positive results in their contribution, it will show in their attitudes. Send letters of appreciation to **all** volunteers. An awards ceremony can be held at the close of the school year to show appreciation for these groups. Present each with a certificate similar to the one on page

Other ways to recognize volunteers follow.

Smile.
Put up a volunteer suggestion box.
Treat volunteers to a soda.
Reimburse assignment-related expenses.
Ask for a report.
Send a birthday card.
Invite them to staff meeting.
Recognize and accommodate their personal needs and problems.
Be pleasant.
Respect volunteers' wishes.
Keep challenging them.
Say "Good Morning."
Greet by name.
Help develop self-confidence.
Award plaques to sponsoring groups.
Take time to explain duties fully.
Motivate staff to share information with volunteers.
Hold rap sessions.
Give additional responsibility.
Allow participation in team planning.
Respect sensitivities.
Enable to grow on the job.
Enable to grow off the job.
Send newsworthy volunteer related information to the media.

Sample Recruitment Letter

Colquitt County School Volunteer Program

Dear Parents

Your boys and girls are our most important resources. We share a common purpose — educating children. Many children need individualized attention, and you have had varied experiences which can help our children learn. YOU can assist many of our children in school. We need volunteers to assist the teacher in ways which will allow more personal assistance to our children.

If you are interested in serving as a volunteer, we will be delighted to hear from you. We have attached a list of duties which can be done by volunteers. If you have a special ability or interest which has not been listed, please insert it on the bottom of the sheet.

You may return the sheet by your child or bring it to the school yourself. We would like to discuss the volunteer program with you in more detail. Let us know when you can come!

We look forward to having you join our team as a partner in providing educational experiences for children.

Sincerely,

Principal

Recruitment Questionnaire

GIFTS
Volunteer Program

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

I would like to *(check all interests)*

☐ Assist the teacher in classroom.

☐ Work with children in small groups.

☐ Work with an individual child.

☐ Work in the media center.

☐ Assist in making bulletin boards.

☐ Help with clerical duties.

☐ Prepare instructional materials.

☐ Speak to classes on a specialty, such as _____.

☐ Help with playground activities.

☐ Other interests (please specify) _____.

I am available to help:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM					
PM					

The best time to reach me by phone is _____

Additional comments or remarks _____

_____

_____

Request for Volunteer Services

Colquitt County School
Community Volunteer Program

School _____ Principal _____

Teacher _____

School Coordinator _____

Category of volunteer service

☐ Regular schedule ☐ Special project ☐ Resource

Volunteer job description _____

_____

Examples of activities _____

_____

Placement Situation

☐ One to one
☐ Small group
☐ General assistance
☐ Office
☐ Library
☐ Other

Student Information

Age range _____

Grade level _____

Desired Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
AM					
PM					

Length of service beginning date _____ ending date _____

Number of volunteers needed _____

Person supervising volunteer

Name _____

Position _____

Date _____ Principal's signature _____

VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE

This is to commend

_____

for ____ *hours of volunteer service given to*

_____

as a member of the Volunteers in Public Schools, Clarke County, Georgia

Presented on _____

_____	_____	_____
Superintendent	Principal	Director, Volunteers in Public Schools

Bright Ideas

School/Community Projects and Events

Projects and special events in the community are another way to bring schools and their neighborhoods into positive contact with each other. They put the system in contact with people who ordinarily would not become involved at all. Careful planning is important and timing is crucial.

Try these ideas. Some are events taking place at school. Others are school-sponsored events in the community.

Special ethnic group week can emphasize the customs, foods and folk dances of a particular cultural heritage.

Book swap. Students can bring in used books from their homes or neighborhoods to exchange for other books or to buy at a reduced cost. Everyone in the community can be invited to take part in this event.

Current issues emphasis. School bulletin boards can focus on a particular newsworthy item, and classes can incorporate the event into their studies.

Schools can help involve citizens in Get-Out-To-Vote campaigns in cooperation with the League of Women Voters.

Education Fair can be a large scale event which provides educators with an opportunity to share ideas, successful programs and teaching techniques. It also serves as an outlet for commercial vendors to show the latest in teaching materials.

Science Fair can highlight displays and demonstrations by the students.

Drama and dance programs can include not only students, but teachers, parents and others in the community.

Dinner theater can be held in the school multipurpose room, sponsored by a parents' group which prepares the dinner and sells tickets.

"Battle of the Bands" competition might be a good way to boost enthusiasm among local high schools. Marching, cheerleading and baton twirling can be included in the program.

Special art show can focus on arts in the school and involve the community arts council, the school system and the parks and recreation department.

Field Day. Special games, races and athletic events are emphasized and prizes are given. Invite the community to become spectators.

Building a creative playground can be a community, school and parent project.

Special musical events can feature students' performances.

Neighborhood carnival. Community neighbors can use a large, convenient outdoor area such as the school playground or athletic field. A theme should be decided on with all events working around that idea. Games, rides, music, refreshments and flea market tables can be set up. Also a special athletic contest might be included.

Compile a directory of services available for adults in need of basic skills training.

Use community resources such as camps, parks, recreational centers, shopping centers or museums.

Use community centers for afternoon/evening/summer tutoring assistance to help high school students pass basic skills proficiency tests. This can include a lead teacher from school, volunteer community tutors (teen and adult) plus use of communities or neighborhood. Retired educators can act as a liaison to visit student homes, talk to parents and enlist their support for the center.

Children's Room Director of the public library can highlight one elementary school per week by having displays of children's work and teachers from that school as storytellers for the daily story hour.

Outstanding Senior Citizens Awards Day can be held at the school to honor local older residents who have greatly contributed to community service. This might be planned to include a luncheon and entertainment — perhaps by some of the senior citizens themselves.

Special Olympics for the Mentally Handicapped can highlight athletic events for this group and will help them feel a sense of accomplishment.

Start "Saturday Clubs" to provide enrichment programs, film showings and family recreational activities at school.

How To's

How to Conduct Successful School Meetings

First and lasting impressions are formed at school meetings. Sometimes parents and other community members visit their local school only when a large event, such as an open house or a back-to-school night, is taking place. They frequently base their opinion of the school and all its programs on this single experience. If they enjoy it, often they will come again and be willing to participate in other school activities. If they are disappointed or are made to feel uncomfortable, the school loses valuable supporters.

Many parents judge a school by the smaller meetings they attend on campus. Parent-teacher conferences and school-sponsored committees help form the lasting impressions they have of the school. With so much valuable parental and community support at stake, it is extremely important that all school meetings, large and small, run smoothly.

Some people attend school-sponsored meetings in community facilities. Still, the school is involved and impressions are important. Successful school meetings come about when those in charge do three things vital to the outcome of any event — plan, promote and prepare.

Plan

When planning a large meeting to take place at your school, get others to help you plan. One way to make sure that a variety of people come to a meeting is to include a variety of people in the planning process. Parents and teachers will be more enthusiastic about the event if they have a voice in deciding what's going to take place. And don't forget nonparents. Community members who do not have children in school are often great resources for planning special events. The planning committee needs to consider the following items.

Reason for the event — What do you expect to accomplish? What do you expect the audience and/or the participants to gain from the meeting?

Date — Choose a date that will allow the greatest number of people to attend.

Time — Choose a time that is convenient not only for the audience but also for the participants and volunteers, if any.

Place — Give careful consideration to the location of the meeting. If the meeting is not held on campus, is the place accessible to most community members? Is it large enough for all the activities planned? Will it hold the number of people expected?

Format — What will happen? Will you need a speaker? Have you scheduled the right number of activities for the length of time you've planned?

Budget — How much money do you have to spend on this event? Decide now which items are priorities in case you've underestimated costs. Schools are in good shape as far as meeting expenses go because they are usually able to use their own facilities. Home economics departments or school food service departments can furnish refreshments. Vocational students can build displays. And school clubs and parents groups can provide volunteer help.

Delegate duties for each planning committee member to perform and monitor their progress.

Small school meetings also need to be planned to be successful. The person in charge should make sure that all attending know the time, place and date. He or she should also be responsible for having everything in readiness for the meeting.

Promote

A coming event has to be sold — even to your own membership. Schools have a great source of in-house publicity at their disposal. Administrators, board members, teachers and students will sell school meetings to the public if they are convinced

the event will be exciting, worthwhile and fun. So, be positive and enthusiastic when approaching not only parents and community members about school meetings but also students and school personnel.

In addition to word-of-mouth publicity from school people, other means should be used to get the word out. **Newspapers** will run notices of school meetings if given advance information. **Local radio and television** talk shows are a good source of publicity. Committee members can **telephone** parents and friends and invite them to come. **Radio spots** reach a large audience. **Flyers** and **handouts** can be passed out in the community and sent home with students.

Prepare

Details must be checked and double checked when preparing for a large meeting. Below is a checklist of items to consider when preparing a facility for an important event.

Room layout and capacity

What is the capacity of the room for different types of room setups?

Are there pillars or other obstructions?

Will doors be in the rear of your meeting setup?

Is there a foyer?

What is the distance from the meeting room to

nearest elevators?
nearest escalators/stairs?
checkroom facilities?
nearest public phone?
restrooms?

Is the room clean and attractive?

Lighting and electrical hook-ups

Will light interfere with movie or slide projections?

Do window curtains darken the room sufficiently?

Do the lights have dimmer switches?

Will ceiling lights reflect light into people's eyes?

What is the capacity of electrical outlets?

Are outlets AC or DC?

Temperature

Is the room air conditioned?

Are there individual controls for cooling and heating?

Furniture and equipment

Are the seats permanent or movable?

Are chairs padded? Do they have armrests?

How many extra temporary seats are available?

Are there mirrors on the walls? Can they be covered if necessary?

Is there a public address system? Does it work? Is there an extra microphone?

Is there a phone in the room? Can it be disconnected?

Is there a permanent stage? If not, can the facility create a speakers' platform?

Have you provided adequate lighting and a lectern for the speaker?

Refreshments

Can beverages be served in a nearby area or in the same room?

Can food be served in the meeting room?

Acoustics

A transistor radio will warn you of acoustics problems. Place it outside your meeting room with the volume turned up. Then go back into the meeting room, closing the door. How clearly can you hear the radio? Check movable walls the same way. How clearly can you hear through "soundproof" walls?

Other factors

Are there students or employees to guide people to proper parking areas?

Are the entrances clearly marked and lighted?

Have local police been notified that a large crowd is expected to arrive at a certain time and leave at a certain time?

Is there a designated coat-hanging area in a place well inside the building so lines don't back up all the way outside?

CS

Are there reading materials or a display of students' work in halls and in areas where early arrivals will be waiting?

Has the custodial staff done a thorough job of preparing for the visit? Is there staff on hand to care for any emergency?

Is there a nurse on duty? Do you know where a doctor can be found in case of an emergency?

Are student guides clearly identified in key locations to help visitors find their way?

Are there easy-to-read directional signs throughout the building and grounds?

Is there a method for visitors to make suggestions and give feedback?

Is there a central location where lost items can be found? Do the visitors know where the place is?

Are bulletin boards up to date?

What is the weather forecast?

Prepare your meeting participants well ahead of time. If you're giving a program, rehearse, rehearse, rehearse! Get the kinks out before the show goes on. When working with school-age children, arrange them so that they cause the least amount of disruption. For example, if they are to be seated in the audience before going on stage, seat them at the very front, close to the stage entrance.

If there is to be a speaker, be sure to brief him or her on what will take place. Most important, give your speaker a time limit.

If audiovisuals are to be used, set up all equipment before the meeting. If this isn't possible because of another activity that is taking place immediately before the A-V presentation, be sure to have someone responsible for getting the equipment set up and removed promptly.

There are four key steps to carrying out a successful meeting.

1. Start and finish on time.
2. Keep your remarks short.
3. Confide in your audience by giving them either an oral or a written program.
4. Thank those who helped by recognizing them in some way.

It is usually a good idea to follow up a large school meeting with a newspaper article, including pictures if available. Invite the press to the event in advance. This publicity will get new supporters and keep old supporters interested in your school.

How to Conduct Surveys or Opinion Polls

Opinion Polls: Who, What, Why, How?

It is important to find out what people believe and what their opinions are. School administrators need to know what parents, teachers and the community think about the school in general and tap their ideas concerning specific parts of the school and its programs. Opinion polls can help do this.

In order to conduct opinion polls, the survey committee must answer four questions. What do we want to know? Why? Who will we ask? and How will we ask it?

What do we want to know?

In answering this first question you may come up with some initial ideas of your own, or you may want to use the opinion poll process to give you the ideas. In fact, you may conduct an opinion poll to find out what the school needs are and later conduct another poll to help you put those needs in priority order. As you can see, what you want to know is perhaps the simplest and yet the most important question you will need to answer.

Why?

The next question you will need to address is why do we want to know certain things about our school or community. This question is easy. Your group should deal only with needs that can be described as important to the committee members and community in general. Opinion polls will reflect certain needs in the school and also give you clues as to why these needs are of interest.

Whom will we ask?

The answer to whom you will ask depends on the questions to be asked. For example, if you want to know what parents think of the school's discipline, you want to interview parents. If you want to know what local businesspeople think of the competencies of high school graduates, you interview businesspeople. If you want to know what voters think of a proposed bond referendum, you will ask the voters.

Let's suppose you want to find out about opinions concerning the reading program in the school. Why? Because the reading program is so important to the education process. Whom should you ask? Well, how about the reading teachers in the school for a start?

It would also be helpful to include the librarian and the principal. How about the volunteer reading aides provided through the PTO or PTSA, they should have some ideas. Can you think of anyone else you might include? How about the reading specialists from the central office, the professors in the local school of education or retired school teachers from the earlier years? All of these people could prove to be helpful and it is important to consider all resources.

How to select a sample.

Once you know what you want, why you want it and whom you will poll, you must decide exactly which individuals will be interviewed. If possible, a universal sampling is ideal. This just means that you are able to ask or poll every member of a group. For example, if you want the opinion of the teachers in your school on a topic, it is a simple matter to poll them all. That is a **universal** sampling.

On the other hand, if you want the opinion of the property tax payers in your school district, you might be talking about hundreds, even thousands, of people. Here it is necessary to pick out a sample of those thousands. Your sample should be representative of the whole group so you can have a good cross-section of opinions. You certainly don't want to talk to just the wealthy taxpayers! Nor would you want to talk just to men! You must see that everyone has an equal chance to be heard in your survey.

Much of the material in this section was taken directly from Conducting Opinion Polls, one in a series of 10 School Advisory Council Action Guides from the School Advisory Council Assistance Project, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, and reprinted here by permission of the producers.

You might want to assure that every age, race, sex, religion, culture and income level is represented in your sample. And each should be represented proportionately. For example, in Starbright School District, there are

1000 Blacks	1200 Women
1000 Whites	900 Men
100 Spanish-speaking natives	
2100 Total	

If you want to take sex and race into account then you should include in your sample

10 Blacks
10 Whites
1 Spanish-speaking native
21 Total

Of those, 12 should be women and 9 should be men.

Maybe that sounds like more than you bargained for. Well you can still have a valid survey if you will just try to be aware of the sample and be sure you are not cutting out any important segments of the community.

How will we ask it?

Now, how do you go about learning what people believe; what their opinions are? One popular informal method is to keep track of the letters to the editor in the local newspaper. Another is to establish a speakers' bureau and debrief the speakers after each assignment. Still another is to keep tabs on incoming phone calls at each school or district office that may give information about community opinions.

Of the more formal methods of feeling the public's pulse, opinion surveys or polls are best known. These can be broken into two major categories.

Written questionnaires that are completed by he respondent (the person answering the questions) and returned.

Interviews during which an interviewer asks questions of the respondent.

Both methods have advantages and drawbacks. Consider both carefully before making a decision as to the method you will use for your opinion survey.

Types of Opinion Polls

Questionnaires

The questionnaire is the simplest and cheapest way to survey opinions. In this case, most of the work is done by the respondent who must read, interpret and answer your questions. Your job is to

Write the questionnaire.

Have it printed.

Get it to the respondents (by mail, ask students to take it home to parents, distribute it at faculty meetings, etc.).

Compile the answers when the completed questionnaires come back in.

Of course there are some drawbacks to questionnaires. You are not present to explain a question if the respondent is unsure of what you want. Sending the questionnaire home with the students may result in a number getting lost before they reach the parent. Mailing is the best way, but postage is high. Even then you will be doing well to receive 30 percent of the questionnaires back. Then you must decide if those who responded are typical of all the people who received the questionnaire — or are just the kind of people who like to answer questionnaires. After all, you are going to use the results of your questionnaire to make decisions about an issue or concern felt by your school committee. So, you want to get as many completed questionnaires back as possible and decide whether or not all groups have been represented as you intended.

Interviews

There are two kinds of interviews, one conducted over the telephone and another conducted face-to-face. Both are effective and serve a purpose, each having its own strengths.

Telephone Interviews

The telephone interview is easier because it allows the interviewer to reach more people in a shorter period of time. It's also more convenient because it can be conducted almost any time day or night, is safe and can be conducted regardless of weather. Finally it is a little easier for shy people to interview over the telephone.

Now for the drawbacks! First of all you are only going to reach those people who have telephones.

What if you want to find out why more people didn't call the school to use the "rumor clearing center"? It would be a little silly to use telephone interviews since many of the very people you want to reach don't have phones. And what about all those unlisted numbers? In some cities as many as 10 percent of the phones have unlisted numbers. In addition it is often difficult to communicate with a stranger on the phone. The interviewer must read the message and questions slowly and distinctly. Even then someone not used to standard English might misunderstand.

Can you think of some other advantages and disadvantages of the telephone interview method? If so, write down or share them with others in your group. Understanding these pros and cons will help you decide what method to use when you begin your public opinion poll.

Person to Person Interviews

Person-to-person interviews are the most difficult to conduct. They take more time, more people, more planning and more training. Yet the results from these surveys are probably the most reliable. Person-to-person interviews mean sitting down, face-to-face, and asking questions of carefully selected individuals.

The method of selection of individuals to interview will vary according to the purposes of your survey. If you want general opinions about the school, you might pick the third house on every other block, the tenth person to come through the grocery store door, or every 100th name on the tax rolls. On the other hand, you may have already selected those you want to poll such as teachers, principals, business people, etc.

Consider other advantages of the person-to-person method and compare them with those of the telephone interview. You may want to consider such a survey.

Clearly, there are advantages and disadvantages to all three of the survey methods mentioned here. It is up to you to decide which most nearly fits your needs. You may use a combination of two or three of these. Comparing the results from such a combination should tell you something worth knowing.

Writing Questionnaires and Interviews

Four elements must be considered when writing both a questionnaire or an interview.

An introduction

The questions

Arranging the questions

Demographics

The Introduction

An introduction tells the respondent what the survey is about and how her/his answers will be used. On a questionnaire, the wording should be simple, brief and to the point. Finally, don't forget to say what should be done with the questionnaire when it has been completed.

An introduction for an interview must be written so that all interviewers approach respondents in exactly the same way. This will help avoid triggering responses by clumsy wording at the outset. In the introduction, the interviewer should introduce her/himself. An introduction could be as simple as this.

"Hello, I'm from Starbright Elementary School and I'd like to ask you just a few quick questions about the school's reading program."

Questions

Writing the questions is more difficult. Questions must be direct and must not cue the respondent to answer any way but the way he or she feels. This, for instance, would be a bad question: "You don't like the way your tax dollars are being wasted in public schools today, do you?" Perhaps this is some better but is still bad: "What do you think about the way tax dollars are being wasted in public schools today?" Here's yet a better version: "Do you believe that tax dollars are being wasted in public schools today?" Perhaps the best way to put it is this: "Do you believe that school officials are doing all they can to see that tax dollars are not being wasted?"

Each question is worded slightly differently and each will key a slightly different answer. Try writing some questions now to see if you can make them clear and avoid keying answers. Be sure that the words and phrases you choose can be easily understood.

Arranging the Questions

The third step in writing the survey is arranging the questions. You can see how a particular answer could be suggested by careful arrangement of the questions. For example, what response do you think you would get from this sequence of questions?

1. How many hours would you guess your son or daughter spends watching TV on school nights?
2. What do you think is the major cause of falling reading scores among today's youth?

Certainly there will be a great many people who would blame TV as the culprit because you have set it up that way. Results from such a survey are worthless. Arrange the questions carefully.

Demographics

Demographics simply means what kind of people completed the questionnaire or interview. You can ask them their age, sex, race, religion, education level, income level, occupation. Can you think of some other things you might like to know about the person responding?

These questions of demographics are asked as a matter of source and should be included right a ong with the other questions. It gives you a better understanding of the survey results. You may learn that senior citizens are against the upcoming bond referendum while you thought they would support it. But that private school parents, who you thought would be against the referendum, are actually for it. Demographics will allow you to glean such detail from your survey.

Testing the Survey

Next you will need to test your survey interview or questionnaire. This does not have to be a lengthy process, but it's a good idea to spend a little time making sure your questions are clear. Sometimes you know what you want to ask but accidentally come up with a question that can be taken two ways. Go to several different people who are similar tc the "real" respondents and ask them to submit to the interview or complete the written questionnaire. This trial run will help you determine if your survey is basically sound and useful.

Suppose you ask, "What is the biggest problem facing public education today?" Your test respondent might say to you, "You want the biggest national problem or just the biggest problem right here in our district?" If you really wanted to know about problems right at home, you should rewrite that question. The trial test can also tell you if your questionnaire is too long, offensive or too vague to give you the kinds of precise answers you may be looking for.

Recruiting Interviewers

If you are going to use an interview method for your survey, you will have to recruit and train interviewers. You should not expect any of them to work more than eight or 10 hours total. They will become fatigued after that time even if it is broken into several days. Interviewers should represent all segments of the community so that any coloring they might give to the responses will be balanced. They must be cordial and totally objective. They must stick strictly to the script and record all responses accurately.

In training interviewers you will want to make sure each has a commitment to doing a good job. Each must be enthusiastic and understand the importance of an accurate poll. They should be asked to pair off and practice interviewing one another until they are familiar with the questions.

When the interviewers begin their work they should be equipped with several items — 1) plenty of sharp pencils, 2) an identification button or name tag, 3) the names of those respondents to be contacted, 4) a supply of questionnaires, 5) clear instructions as to what should be done with the questionnaires upon completion, 6) instructions for returning if the interviewer can't complete her/his assignment.

Tabulating the Results

Tabulating the results of your survey can be simple or it can be a nightmare. **Always consider how much effort you can afford to put into tabulation when you design the survey.** Keeping "open ended" questions to a minimum will help in tabulation. If you ask, "What do you think ought to be done to improve discipline in our schools?" you had better be prepared to have to consider dozens, even hundreds, of different answers.

Keeping all questions to "yes" or "no" will make your job much easier. Or you may want to give the respondents a range of responses to choose from. "What percentage of a first grader's time do you think is spent in reading instruction: a) 10 percent, b) 25 percent, c) 50 percent, d) 75 percent?" Such multiple choice questions make tabulation faster and cleaner.

More time will be needed, of course, if you choose to cross code your answers with those who responded according to demographics. You may know that 68 percent of those responding favor a free breakfast program, but wouldn't you like to know what percentage of mothers of school age children responded "yes" to that question?

Conclusions

If your group has completed the suggested activities in this outline, then you are well on your way to developing a survey. Review what you have done, add some questions if necessary and polish up your plan.

Here are some tips to remember.

- Set up a time line for writing, testing and tabulating the results of the survey. Assign responsibilities for the various steps.
- Publicize your poll in advance so that respondents will be looking for it. They'll be more likely to cooperate.
- Make sure you publicize the results of the poll and that you share any resulting programs or projects with the community so that all may know that the poll was useful in some way.
- Don't make your polls too long. It's much better to have a short one every year than to have a long one once every five years or so.
- Your final report should always say who sponsored the poll, who paid for it, who conducted it, how the sample was picked and exactly what the questions were.

Good luck and try to remember that surveys and opinion polls can be useful tools for schools in obtaining important information.

How to Help New Teachers Off to a Good Start

Presented by Catherine Osteen
Former Administrative Assistant for Communications and Information
Richmond County Board of Education

Why is a good new teacher orientation program important?

A well designed orientation for new teachers which helps them adjust to their new living and working environments can produce better teachers. Also, it can initiate a positive attitude toward the school and the school system. With a continuing flow of interest and information you can build good staff relations and build in your teachers strong support for the school system.

How should a good orientation program be conducted?

To have a successful orientation program at the beginning of a school year, planning must begin the year before.

I. During the school year, you should

Survey the new teachers on their opinions of the orientation they received (if any) to their school and your school system.

Ask several new teachers representing different schools, grade levels and/or subject areas to serve on a New Teacher Orientation Committee. These persons are highly qualified to share experiences and make helpful suggestions.

II. In the late spring, each school should

Send the new teacher a copy of policies, procedures and school forms so he/she may become familiar with these rather than be deluged with more than can be absorbed at the beginning of the school year.

Send the new teachers a glossary of some of the educational terms in use in your system. It is quite difficult for someone to understand information unless he/she understands the vocabulary in it.

Send the new teachers two fact sheets, one giving information on the community and one giving information on the school system.

Invite new teachers to come to the school to meet with department and grade level chairmen to see the teaching materials they will use.

III. At the beginning of the school year, each school should

Allow time for teachers to meet with central office personnel who can explain insurance, pay procedures, special programs, student services, among other things of interest to new teachers.

Arrange for a bus tour of the school attendance zone for new teachers so they will be familiar with their students' out-of-school environment.

Have the principal and other supervisors greet each newcomer and communicate an open-door policy that sets a tone for open exchange of ideas.

Choose staff members for a welcoming committee. These persons can meet with the new teachers periodically during the first few months of school. They can help new teachers by giving them a tour of the building and answering questions on housing, the education association, graduate schools, certification, banks, doctors and dentists and other topics.

Assign a "big brother" or "building buddy" to each new teacher, a friend to help with the new employees' needs and to provide practical teaching tips.

Set up "trading post" meetings in which veterans and novices meet to exchange ideas on effective classroom management and instruction techniques.

After the first few months, meet with the new teachers to evaluate the orientation program to make it even better next year.

Resources For School/Community Relations Programs

Resources Available From Agencies/Organizations

The following resources and handouts were used as references in the development of this manual. They are available for review in the Public Information and Publications Division (PIP).

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Communications Handbook. American Association of Agricultural College Editors.

The Community and Its School. Ministry of Education, Ontario.

Community Relations for Schools, by Marjorie L. Karges and B. Dean Bowles, Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Individualized Schooling, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

"The Community School Idea." Text of an address by Hon. Thomas L. Wells, Minister of Education, Ontario.

Elementary School Public Relations Tool Kit, NSPRA.

Secondary School Public Relations Tool Kit, NSPRA.

Georgia Department of Education Correspondence Manual, PIP.

Georgia Department of Education Stylebook, PIP.

Get Involved for the Schools Handbook for Implementation of a School Volunteer Program, Colquitt County Schools, Moultrie, Georgia.

Handbook for School Volunteers, Chatham Council on Human Relations, part of the Emergency School Aid Act Program.

How to be an Effective Volunteer in School Nutrition Programs, by Sandra K. Smith, Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia PTA.

Introducing...Kanawa County Schools (a school/community relations packet), 200 Elizabeth St., Charleston, West Virginia.

Making the Most of Special Events, Dorothy Ducas, Public Relations Society of America, 845 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022, (212) 826-1750.

Managing Your PR: Working with Volunteers, Ducas.

National Diffusion Network Volunteer Development Project, Dade County Schools, 1410 NE Second Avenue, Miami, Florida 33132.

No Matter What Shape - Communicate, PIP.

Open Doors. A Community School Handbook by Margaret Gayfer, Ministry of Education, Ontario.

Parental Involvement Needed to Win Trust and Understanding, Thomas Wells, Minister of Education, Ontario, Mowat Block, 14th Floor, Queens Park, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1L.

Parents are Teachers, Too, 50 Games to Enjoy with Your Child at Home, Chatham Council on Human Relations.

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Top of the Class, folder from Northside Atlanta Parents for Public Schools, 391 Herrington Drive NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30342.

Totally Involved Parent's Program - Parent Orientation Packet, Meadowbrook Elementary School, Augusta, Georgia.

Your Office Staff: A Plus for Public Relations - A Communications Handbook for the School Administrator, NSPRA.

The Education Information Center for the Georgia Department of Education has national access by computer to education-related publications and data. The number to call is (404) 656-2402.

Handouts

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Basic Elements of External District Level Public Relations Programs, Flatt.

Basic Elements of Internal Building Level Public Relations Programs, Flatt.

Basic Elements of Internal District Level Public Relations Programs, Flatt.

Building Level Communications: A Must for a Good School Program, Scott Sheridan, Media Specialist, Waycross Public Schools.

A Building Level Communications Plan, Westside Community Schools, District 66, Omaha, Nebraska.

Communicating Proficiency Assessment Results to the Media: Some Practical Suggestions, PIP.

Community Involvement Ideas That Work, PIP.

Defining Parent Roles for More Involvement in the Schools, by Ellen Claiborne, Georgia PTA President.

Dynamic Speaking, NSPRA, by Brenda Gilbert, Community Schools Coordinator, Scotland County Schools, Laurinburg, North Carolina.

Especially for Superintendents: 20 Tips for Improving Your Communication, from Gary Marx, associate director, American Association of School Administrators, 1801 North Moore Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

Getting and Keeping Parental Involvement, PIP.

Guidelines for Good Press Relations, Marx.

How to Pass a Bond Issue, from Mary Eleanor Wickersham, Washington County School System, Sandersville, Georgia 31082.

How to Talk to a Reporter, Georgia School Public Relations Association.

How to Use a Speakers' Bureau, Community Information Office, Fulton County Schools, 786 Cleveland Avenue SW, Atlanta, Georgia 30315.

How to Write a News Release, PIP.

How Would You Rate Your School's Performance? PIP.

Ideas for Building School/Community Relations, PIP.

Information Meeting with Realtors and Business Representatives, from Cynthia Gardiner, Public Relations Coordinator, Durham County Schools, P.O. Box 3823, Durham, NC 27702 (919) 683-2591.

An Internal Communications System — For Healthy Staff Relations, from Edward E. Ohlbaum, Chatham County Schools, Savannah, Georgia.

Low Cost Ways to Improve Publications, NSPRA, Kim B. Hoke, Granville County Schools, Oxford, N.C.

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New Teacher Orientation — Help Them Off to a Good Start, from Catherine Osteen Richmond County Board of Education, Augusta, Georgia.

The Principalship in Today's School: How to Explain the Role to Parents, Community, Students, from Marvin M. Harris, principal, Eastern Hills High School, 3701 Shelton, Fort Worth, Texas.

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Successful Parent-Teacher Conferences, PIP.

10 Commandments for Better Communication for School Officials, PIP.

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